NATION

Be practical on dogs, SC tells Sharmila's lawyer

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BUSINESS

Vi gets AGR relief, to pay ₹124 cr annually for 6 yrs

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SPORTS

Sindhu advances to semis after Yamaguchi retires

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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India bins US claims on PM, Don call

MEA cites 8 call as US claims trade deal ended as PM did not talk to Trump

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has claimed that a proposed India-US trade deal failed to material-ise because Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not call US President Donald Trump. This is a charge that New strongly rejected as "inaccurate" on Friday, asserting that Modi and Trump spoke at least eight times in 2025.

Lutnick, on Thursday, said India and the US were close to sealing a trade pact but failed to meet a strict, time-bound window of "three Fridays" set by Washington. He alleged that the Indian side was uncomforta-ble with the deadline and that Modi did not eventually make the call. As a result, India was overtaken by countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia, which moved faster in the negotiating queue, he said.

He added that Trump approaches trade deals like a staircase, where the first country gets the best terms. India, he claimed, had been named by Trump as next in line after the UK trade deal in June, but delayed its decision and lost its advantage.

External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India and the US had committed to negotiating a bilateral trade agreement following a Modi–Trump meeting at the White House on 13 February last year. "Since then, the two sides have held multiple rounds of negotiations to arrive at a balanced and mutually beneficial trade agreement," he said.

Talks hit a roadblock after Trump imposed a 50 per cent tariff on India, including an 25 per cent duty over Russian oil.

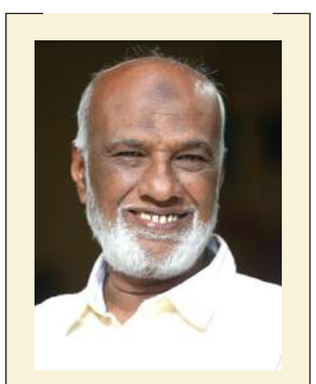
US President Donald Trump; US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick; PM Narendra Modi ***PHOTO: PTI/ WIKIPEDIA***

India criticises Mamdani for note to Umar Khalid

India also disapproved of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani writing a note expressing solidarity with jailed activist Umar Khalid. "We expect public representatives to respect the independence of the judiciary in oth-er democracies," Jaiswal said.

India slams China's projects in Shaksgam Valley

New Delhi criticised China's infrastructure projects in the Shaksgam Valley, reiterating that it is Indian terri-tory illegally ceded by Pakistan in 1963, and said it reserved the right to take necessary measures to safe-guard its interests. *—PTI*



Salar News photographer gets K'taka Media Academy award

The Karnataka Media Academy announced the recipients of the annual awards. Salar Digital News photographer Mohammed Asad was among the 30 journalists who were honoured. With a career spanning over four decades, Asad has captured history with his camera - from the 1990 crash of Indian Airlines Flight 605 that killed 146, 1992 Bengaluru riots following Babri Masjid demolition, to the recent anti-encroachment drives in Bengaluru's Kogilu and Thanisandra.

PARL BUDGET SESSION TO BEGIN ON 28 JAN

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

The Budget session of Parliament is expected to begin on 28 January, and **the Union Budget is set to be tabled on 1 February**, a Sunday, according to a tentative schedule prepared by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.

Officials, citing the tentative schedule, said on Friday that President Droupadi Murmu will address a joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament on 28 January.

The two houses will not meet on 29 January due to the Beating Retreat ceremony. Parliament will sit on 30 January when the Economic Survey is likely to be tabled.

On 31 January, there will be no sittings of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The Union Budget is scheduled to be tabled on 1 February, a Sunday.

After discussions on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address and Union Budget, Parliament will be adjourned for nearly a month-long recess on 13 February. It will reconvene on 9 March and conclude on 2 April.

Contrary to convention, instead of 3 April, Good Friday, the Parliament is expected to be adjourned a day before, on 2 April, officials further said. *—PTI*

62 dead in Iran stir; internet cut off

The protests against Iran's falling Rial have intensified steadily since 28 December, 2025 ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

DUBAI, 9 JAN

The protests in Iran dramatically escalated on Friday as the government imposed a countrywide blackout by cutting off the internet and international telephone calls.

The death toll in nationwide protests jumped to at least 62.

The protests against Iran's falling Rial have intensified steadily since beginning 28 December, but have mounted in recent weeks. Iran state media reported that were casualties on Friday, without elaborating.

With communications cut in the country, Salar could not verify any new deaths. The death toll up until Friday was 42, independent organisations said. Iran state media said that "terrorist agents" of the US and Israel set the fires and sparked increased violence.

Short videos shared online purport to show demonstrators chanting against the theocracy and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the government. Some could also be heard hailing the exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, whose fatally ill father fled Iran just before the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Khamenei has vowed to crackdown on protesters, as Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei separately vowed that punishment for protesters "will be decisive, maximum and without any legal leniency."

Pahlavi's call to protests on Friday is believed to have further fuelled public anger. On Thursday, protesters were heard chanting "Death to the dictator!" and "Death to the Islamic Republic!" Others praised the Shah, shouting: "This is the last battle! Pahlavi will return!" Thousands could be seen on the streets before all communication to Iran cut out. *—PTI*

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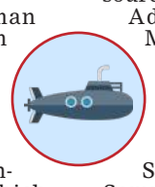
INDIA-GERMANY CLOSE TO SIGNING $8B SUBMARINE DEAL

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Ahead of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's first official visit to India on 12-13 January, India and Germany advance discussion on finalising the submarine manufacturing deal, which could by far India's largest defence contract valued at around USD 8 billion, said sources.



Additionally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a three-day visit to Gujarat from 10 to 12 January, during which he will participate in the Somnath Swabhiman Parv at the Somnath temple and a Vibrant Gujarat regional conference in Rajkot.

He will also meet German Chancellor Merz in Ahmedabad on 12 January. They will visit the Sabarmati Ashram and participate in an international kite festival at the Sabarmati riverfront together.

The two leaders will review the progress made in the India-Germany Strategic Partnership, which completed 25 years recently. *—PTI*

Karnataka Guv returns two Bills, 19 get assent

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

Two bills passed by the Karnataka Legislature earlier have been returned by Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot to the State government, seeking further clarifications on them, even as 19 pending legislations have received his assent, Lok Bhavan said here on Friday.

The two bills that have been returned by the Governor are the Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub-classification) Bill and the Shree Chamundeshwari Kshetra Development Authority and Certain Other Laws (Amendment) Bill.

"Out of 22 Bills, 19 have been approved by the governor and sent for publishing in the Official Gazette. Two Bills—the Karnataka Scheduled Castes (Sub-classification) Bill and the Shree Chamundeshwari Kshetra Development Authority and Certain Other Laws (Amendment) Bill—have been returned to the government, seeking further clarifications," according to a press release issued by the governor's Special Secretary R Prabhu Shankar.

The Karnataka Hate Speech and Hate Crimes (Prevention) Bill is currently under the governor's consideration, the press release said. The bill was passed recently despite the Opposition BJP's protests. The bill provides for a fine of up to Rs 1 lakh and a jail term of up to seven years. *—PTI*

DRAMA REACHES HC

Didi files FIRs against ED; agency seeks CBI probe against her

KOLKATA, 9 JAN

West Bengal Chief Minister and Enforcement Directorate locked horns again on Friday. Mama-ta Banerjee, who is also Trinamool Congress head, lodged two police complaints against En-forcement Directorate (ED) over its raids at the Kolkata office of political consultancy firm I-PAC and the residence of its co-founder, Prateek Jain.

Meanwhile, the ED moved Calcutta High Court seeking a CBI probe while accusing Mamata and police of obstructing probe and removing documents and devices.

Mamata's alleged criminal intimidation under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and Kolkata Police filed a suo motu case.

TMC has also moved the High Court, alleging that ED seized confidential data related to the upcoming assembly polls.

TMC MP Mahua Moitra being detained during a protest against ED raids on I-PAC, in New Delhi on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

The ED maintains the searches were part of a money-laundering probe linked to a coal scam. The next hearing is on 14 January. *—PTI*

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'Kantara', 'Tanvi the Great' among Indian entries for Oscars

LOS ANGELES, 9 JAN

Four Indian feature films, including the Kannada blockbuster 'Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1' and the Hindi film 'Tanvi the Great', are among the titles eligible to compete for the Best Picture award at the 2026 Oscars, the Academy announced Thursday.

Alongside Rishabh Shetty's 'Kantara', other Indian entries include the multilingual animated film 'Mahavatar Narsimha' as well as the Tamil film 'Tourist Family' by debut filmmaker Abishan Jeeviinth. Radhika Apte 'Sister Midnight' is also on the list of films eligible for Best Picture. Inclusion in the reminder list does not guarantee a nomination. Films must still undergo the Academy's voting process.

The Academy's General Entry list of 317 films includes several other Indian titles as well as co-productions, which are eligible for consideration across various categories at the Academy Awards. In all, 317 feature films are eligible for the 98th Academy Awards. Of these, 201 films meet the additional eligibility requirements for consideration in the Best Picture category. *—PTI*

44% Indian cities face chronic air pollution: Report

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Nearly 44 per cent Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes, an analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found. *—PTI*

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Prasar Bharti to air influencers' content on DD News

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Seeking to boost the creators' economy, public broadcaster Prasar Bharati on Friday said it was offering a 30-minute prime-time slot for content creators, five days a week on DD News and its digital platforms under a revenue-sharing model The "Creator's Corner" will be telecast from Monday to Friday at 7 pm, with a repeat telecast at 9:30 am from Tuesday to Saturday, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters here. Under the initiative, 90 per cent of the revenue will go to the creators. The content will range from two to 10 minutes, sourced from applications vetted by an independent team. *—PTI*

Madras HC does a flip-flop on Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan'

CHENNAI, 9 JAN

The Madras High Court on Friday stayed a single judge's order directing the CBFC to immediately certify 'Jana Nayagan', starring actor-turned-politician Vijay. The division bench's order came hours after Justice PT Asha set aside the CBFC's decision to refer the film to a review committee, leaving its release uncertain. *—PTI*

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DAMAGE CONTROL

Grok AI restricts AI image generation amid porno pics row

LONDON, 9 JAN

Elon Musk's AI chatbot Grok is now restricting image generation and editing after a global backlash over its production of sexualised deepfakes. Integrated into the social media platform X, the chatbot has come under scrutiny for allegedly complying with malicious user requests to alter images depicting women in bikinis or in sexually explicit scenarios.

On Friday, Grok was responding to image-altering requests with the message: "Image generation and editing are currently limited to paying subscribers. You can subscribe to unlock these features."

Sources have found that several such requests involved images of children. Governments and regulators across multiple regions have responded, with the UK condemning the platform and Ofcom launching an urgent probe under the Online Safety Act. India issued an ultimatum demanding the removal of explicit content and stronger safeguards, while the European Union opened an investigation under the Digital Services Act and Australia launched a formal inquiry into alleged image-based abuse.

Both the chatbot and X are operated by Elon Musk's artificial intelligence venture, xAI. While subscriber numbers for Grok are not publicly available, reports suggest a decline in the volume of explicit deepfakes generated in recent days.

Grok, which launched in 2023, is free for X users and allows prompts via posts or replies. Last summer, xAI added an image-generation feature, Grok Imagine, which included a "spicy mode" capable of producing adult content. *—PTI*

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13 killed as private bus falls into gorge in Himachal

NAHAN, 9 JAN

Thirteen people died, and about 35 others were injured after a private bus fell into a 500-feet deep gorge in Himachal Pradesh's Sirmaur district on Friday afternoon

The accident occurred when the bus en route from Shimla to Kupvi via Rajgarh veered off the road and plunged into the gorge, down the road, and landed upside down near Haripurdhar village, around 95 kilometres from the district headquarters, Nahan.

Sub-divisional Magistrate (SDM) Sangrah, Sunil Kayath, reached the spot of the accident and supervised the rescue operation. All the injured and dead were rushed to nearby Sangrah and Dadahu hospitals.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu directed the district authorities to provide all possible assistance to the next of kin of those killed in the accident and ensure the best medical care to the injured, an official statement said.

The cause of the accident is yet to be ascertained. Locals, who rushed to the spot to rescue the accident victims, said they suspected the bus driver might have lost control of the vehicle, following which it skidded off the road and fell into the deep gorge.

Balbir Chauhan, a resident and BJP leader, commended the locals for their 'remarkable work in rescuing the passengers'. *—PTI*

Man stabs Belagavi youth for looking at him

BELAGAVI, 9 JAN

A youth was stabbed in an alleged attempt to murder in New Gandhi Nagar area of Belagavi on Friday evening, shortly after he stepped out of a mosque after offering Friday prayers. The accused, Mujammil Sattigeri, 24, allegedly attacked Jushan Chaus, 18, with a knife after claiming that the victim had looked at him. Mujammil had been released on bail from prison only a month ago following a High Court order. Police said the accused was arrested by Malamaruti police soon after the incident. The injured youth was shifted to BIMS Hospital for treatment, where his condition is reported to be stable. ***—Salar News***

3 Bidar RTO staffers held for misusing police uniform

BIDAR, 9 JAN

Three staff persons from the city RTO office have been remanded to judicial custody on charges of wearing and misusing police uniforms. The staff members were identified as Shivaputra Mallikarjun, Basavaraj Saibanna and Gururaj Rangappa, who were working as outsourced vehicle drivers at the RTO office. Based on a complaint filed by RTO officer GK Biradar, a case has been registered at the city's New Town Police Station against four persons, including a supervisor of Libra Management Services Private Limited, the agency that supplied the outsourced employees. In the complaint, it was stated that they were told moving around wearing police uniforms was inappropriate. However, disregarding this instruction, the staff continued to move around everywhere wearing police uniforms. ***—Salar News***

PHOTO: ANI

Electoral bonds, PM CARES lack transparency: DGR

MANGALURU, 9 JAN

State Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Friday accused the BJP-led Centre of evading accountability on electoral bonds and the PM CARES Fund, alleging diversion of public attention through politically motivated controversies. Speaking to reporters here on Friday, Rao claimed that the electoral bond scheme involved thousands of crores of rupees, but there was no clarity on who donated the money or who benefited from it. "The real issue is the looting of public wealth through opaque systems," he alleged. Rao questioned the legal and ethical basis of declaring PM CARES as a private trust while allowing it to use the Prime Minister's name and national symbols. "Why was it declared private? How much money was collected? Where was it spent?" he asked. ***—PTI***

Wadiyar asks Centre for funds to preserve Cauvery

MYSURU, 9 JAN

Mysuru-Kodagu MP Yaduveer Wadiyar wrote to the Union Minister of Jal Shakti seeking central government funds to conserve the Cauvery river in Kodagu. Noting that the Cauvery has become increasingly polluted, he stressed need for conservation and development of the riverbanks of Cauvery across the district. "These issues are affecting water quality, public health, river ecology and the livelihoods of people dependent on the river," the MP noted. He urged the union minister to order a comprehensive survey of the boundaries of the Cauvery in the district to enable eviction of the encroachments, followed by rehabilitation and systematic riverbank development in a planned manner. ***—Agencies***

CM, DyCM to meet Prez over 'Malayalam imposition'

Siddu writes to Vijayan on Malayalam Language Bill

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

CM Siddaramaiah **PHOTO: X**

- The Malayalam Language Bill, 2025 seeks to formally adopt Malayalam as the official language of Kerala, and mandate its use across government and education departments. Karnataka opposes it due to the Kannadiga population in the border area of Kasargod

Kannada and Culture Minister of Karnataka, Shivaraj Tangadagi, said a delegation from the State led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar will meet President Droupadi Murmu and urge her not to give assent to the Kerala government's Malayalam Language Bill.

The Malayalam Language Bill, 2025 seeks to formally adopt Malayalam as the official language of Kerala, and mandate its use across government, education, judiciary, public communication, commerce, and the digital domain, subject to constitutional provisions. Kerala currently recognises both English and Malayalam as official languages.

However, the Karnataka Congress has alleged that the Bill will infringe upon the rights of Kannadigas in Kerala's Kasargod region, terming it "Malayalam imposition".

According to article 350(b) of the Indian Constitution, linguistic minorities should be protected, Kerala-Kasaragod linguistic officer should be appointed and the opinion of people living there should be taken, Tangadagi told press.

"The Malayalam Language Bill sent to the Governor for assent has put the Kannadigas in the border towns in trouble. We will meet the President of India Droupadi Murmu and apprise her about the development," the minister said.

There are about 7.5 lakh Kannadigas in Kasargod, he said. There are about 210 Kannada schools functioning in the border regions.

"Injustice should not be meted out to the Kannadigas. We also will not let it happen. I am also considering to send a team to Kasaragod," he said.

Meanwhile, Siddaramaiah wrote to Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan expressing his "serious concern". He urged the Kerala government to not go ahead with the Bill.

He said that it violated Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution which "guarantee the right to conserve language and administer educational institutions of choice".

"Any legislative measure must reflect not only constitutional legality, but constitutional morality," he said. "If this Bill is passed, Karnataka will oppose it by exercising every constitutional right available to us, in defence of linguistic minorities and the plural spirit of our Republic. This position flows not from confrontation, but from our duty to the Constitution and to the people whose voices must never be marginalised."

He noted that the polulation in Kasargod takes pride in Kannada.

—Salar News with Agencies

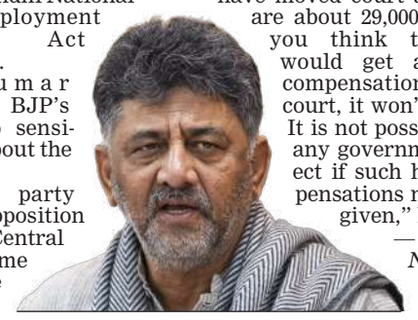
TELEVISED FIGHT?

DKS challenges BJP for an open debate on G Ram G

BENGALURU/ VIJAYAPURA, 9 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday challenged the BJP leaders for an open debate on the merits of MGNREGA against the Centres new VB-G RAM G rural employment scheme.

This follows Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's announcement that a two-day legislative session will be called to pressure the Union government to re-implement the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).



Shivakumar pointed to BJP's campaign to sensitise people about the G RAM G.

"Let their party President, Opposition Leader or a Central Minister come for a debate on a television channel," he said.

COMPENSATION FOR FARMERS

Later speaking in Vijayapura, Shivakumar said that the State government has announced a compensation Rs 30-40 lakhs for the farmers of the region. A total of Rs 70,000 crore would be given as compensation. "The previous government had fixed the compensation at Rs 20-25 lakh only."

"The farmers of the region have moved court and there are about 29,000 cases. If you think that you would get a higher compensation in the court, it won't happen. It is not possible to do any government project if such high compensations need to be given," he added. *— Salar News with agencies*

HDK claims interference in Ballari probe, HM denies

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

JD(S) leader HD Kumaraswamy tore into the Congress government, accusing Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar of interfering in the probe into the Ballari violence which left one person dead. However, Home Minister Parameshwara said that there was no interference.

The Union Minister noted that Shivakumar had recently met with police officials in Ballari.

"Did the Home Minister or CM tell you to go ahead and hold the meeting?" Kumaraswamy wrote on X on Friday.

"No. That's why I said: What, are they limp Home Ministers? Or rubber-stamp Home Ministers? Did you get any special constitutional amendment done to illegally encroach on a senior minister's (Parameshwara portfolio like this?"

Shivakumar on Thursday had said he had nothing to learn from Kumaraswamy, and said that the JD(S) looked like it would merge with the BJP soon.

Kumaraswamy quipped that the experience Shivakumar had was in land grabbing.

Parameshwara denied Kumaraswamy's charge. He insisted that Shivakumar hadn't encroached on his portfolio.

"Kumaraswamy may be right that the Deputy CM is also just a cabinet minister and he doesn't have extra powers as per the constitution. But, as a government representative, he (Shivakumar) going there cannot be termed as wrong. He has gone there with the responsibility of being a cabinet minister and Deputy CM, as I couldn't go," Parameshwara told press.

"Cabinet is a collective responsibility, it cannot be called interference.....if he had really interfered, issued directions to police officers and if it had a different impact, I would have accepted the allegations of interference. I don't know how Kumaraswamy has understood things," he added.

The case stems from a clash in Ballari where one person was killed during a clash between supporters of Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and Gangavati BJP MLA G Janardhan Reddy over the instillation of a Valmiki banner.

—Salar News with agencies

LIFE IN A... METRO

Children eat in the rubble of their home as another family sits in their now open air bedroom on Friday, a day after the Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) demolished over 60 houses at Thanisandra. The property is reportedly worth around Rs 80 crores, and many of the evicted had property deeds **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Hubballi disrobing row: Govt mulls CID probe

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

The BJP protest the alleged disrobing of a party woman **PHOTO:X/@RAshokaBJP**

Home Minister G Parameshwara said the government is mulling handing over the investigation into the arrest of a woman BJP worker in Hubballi to the CID. The woman alleged that police disrobed her during the arrest, which officials have denied.

Parameshwara said on Friday that the transfer will be finalised after a discussion with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"We are discussing handing over the case to CID. After discussing with the Chief Minister and taking his permission, it will be handed over to the CID," Parameshwara told press in the City. If the case was handed over, the CID would investigate the incident and submit a report to the government.

Asked about the suspension of an inspector in connection with the incident, Parameshwara said senior officials have taken necessary immediate action.

"Based on preliminary information, I had earlier said that the police did not disrobe the woman and she did it herself. But as we wanted it to be investigated in detail, we are thinking about it (CID probe)," he added. *—PTI*

Court refuses stay on Sri Sri land probe

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday said that it will not stay further probe or provide interim protection to spiritual leader **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, who has been accused in an FIR for alleged encroachment of Bengaluru's public land, sources said.

According to the sources, during the hearing of a petition filed by Shankar seeking dismissal of the FIR, Justice M Nagaprasanna said that stopping the investigation at the current stage would be contrary to the earlier directions given by the division bench that ordered action against the encroachers.

Ravi Shankar had allegedly encroached on public land, including constructions over a rajakaluve (storm water drain) connecting lakes in parts of Kaggalipura Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, in Bengaluru South Taluk.

The bench said, "To stall any kind of investigation now would be running counter to what the Division Bench observes and permitting the appropriate authorities to act against the encroachers. Therefore, without looking into the records, it would not be appropriate to pass any protective order at this juncture. Petitioner is at liberty to move, in the event any notice of investigation is issued upon the petitioner."

The court has listed the matter for further consideration on 12 January, said sources. *—Agencies*

EIGHT SHOPS GUTTED IN FIRE AT A BUS STAND IN BR HILLS

MYSURU, 9 JAN

Eight shops were gutted in fire in an accidental fire tragedy triggered by an electrical short circuit at Biligirirangana Betta bus stand atop BR Hills in Yelandur taluk of Chamarajanagar district in the wee hours of Friday, police said.

According to police, the fire that broke out around 2am soon spread from one shop to another, leading to destruction of items in petty shops, furniture and hotels and other stores in the bus stand. Three LPG gas cylinders also exploded in a hotel. About 25 to 30 lakhs properties were damaged during the incident, according to initial information given by shopkeepers. No casualties were reported, Police told Salar News. Police said that a short circuit triggered the mishap and do no suspect foul play. *—Salar News*

Dental student ends life, kin blames college management

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

A 23-year-old dental college student was found hanging at her residence here on Friday, police said.

She was identified as Yashaswini, a third-year student of oral medicine and radiology.

Family members have accused the college management of "harassing" her, claiming the alleged humiliation drove her to take the extreme step.

She was the only child of Parimala and Bhudevaiah, the police added.

According to her mother, Yashaswini had taken leave on Wednesday due to eye pain. When she returned to college the following day, she was "humiliated" in front of other students for not participating in a seminar.

Parimala alleged that a lecturer had prevented her daughter from taking part in the seminar and "harassed" her for not making a presentation.

Following the incident, aggrieved students staged a sit-in protest outside the morgue over the death of Yashaswini. Police said a case has been registered and further investigation is underway.

— PTI

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

Four Sabarimala pilgrims killed in road accident

TUMAKURU, 9 JAN

- The deceased are Venkatesh, 30; Marutappa, 44; Gavisiddappa, 28; and Sakshi, 7. All the dead are residents of Kukkanur village in Koppal district.

A cruiser carrying Sabarimala pilgrims rammed into a stationary lorry near the Vasanthanarasapura Industrial Area near Kora in Tumakuru district.

Police said the pilgrims were returning from Sabarimala. Four people were killed in the accident.

The deceased are Venkatesh, 30; Marutappa, 44; Gavisiddappa, 28; and Sakshi, 7.

All the dead are residents of Kukkanur village in Koppal district.

The injured Srinivas, 32; Praveen Kumar, 28; Rajappa, 45, Huligappa, 32; Rakesh, 24; Tirupati, 33; Srinivas, 32; have been hospitalised.

The injured were admitted to a nearby hospital, while the bodies of the deceased were shifted to the mortuary.

Police said 12 people were in the cruiser. Two of the injured are critical.

Ulugappa, the father of Sakshi, who died in the accident, broke down.

"Sakshi was my daughter. She was studying in first standard. We had gone to Sabarimala on 5 January. I do not know how the accident happened. Ten of us had taken the Ayyappa mala together. This was the second time we had taken her to Sabarimala," Ulugappa said. *—Salar News*

EXEMPLARY WORK

Journalists conferred 'Karnataka Media Award'

BENGALURU, 9 JAN

PHOTO: AI

The Karnataka Media Academy on Friday announced the names of the recipients of its annual and endowment awards for the year 2025, including journalists and writers from across the state.

This year's awards were conferred on 30 journalists chosen for their exemplary works from the print, electronic and digital media. Besides, 10 writers have also been selected for endowment awards.

An organisation's press release stated that the Special Award carries a cash prize of Rs 1 Lakh and a citation plaque. The endowment awards include a cash award of Rs 50, 000 besides a citation and plaque.

Among those conferred with the prestigious awards are Udayavani Chamarajanagar district reporter Banashankar Aradhya. The Special Award for 2025 went to Sarita Rai.

The Karnataka Media Academy award recipients include D Kumaraswamy, Banashankar Aradhya, Hema Venkat, Manjunath YL, Ananth Nadig, Gururaj Waman-rao Jamkhandi, MM Patil, L Vivekananda, R P Bharatraj Singh, Prof Poornaananda, Mohammed Asad, Tungarenuka, Mohiuddin Pasha, Rudrappa Asangi, Satish Acharya, Somashekar Padukere, Gulmar Mirza, Ganesh Hegde Itagi, Aarti HN, K Lakshmana, Uma Ananth, Manjunath Mahalingapur, and Manjunath T, Mal-likarjun Wadi, Pratima Nandakumar, Amit Upadhye, Prabhu Swamy Natekar, Siddegowda N, Sanjeev Kamble and Neelakantha KR. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

Man who sent 'death threat' to Bengal Guv held

KOLKATA, 9 JAN

Police have arrested the man, who allegedly sent a death threat email to West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose.The accused was nabbed from Salt Lake area near Kolkata on 8 January. Initial probe revealed the accused had also issued the threat to the Lok Bhavan on its WhatsApp number. A detailed report about the incident was sent to the home ministry. Bose had received a death threat via email, in which the sender had threatened to "blast" him. Around 60-70 central police personnel deployed for his protection. Meanwhile, Bose said that he would continue working for the people and that no force could stop him from doing so. *—PTI*

ED raids to steal TMC strategy: Mamata

WB CM leads 10km protest rally; says she did nothing wrong by visiting the search sites

KOLKATA, 9 JAN

Leading a nearly 10km protest march through central Kolkata, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday accused the Enforcement Directorate of raiding political consultancy I-PAC to "steal" Trinamool Congress strategy ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections, asserting she had done nothing wrong by visiting the search sites.

Addressing a rally after the march, Banerjee said she intervened at the ED search purely as TMC chairperson, not as chief minister. "What I did yesterday, I did as the TMC chairperson. I have done nothing illegal," she said, referring to her arrival at the I-PAC office and the residence of its India head Pratik Jain.

The ED alleged Banerjee entered Jain's residence during a money-laundering search linked to the coal-smuggling case and took away "key evidence", including documents and electronic devices. Banerjee rejected the charge, saying officials entered at 6am while she reached around noon. "By then, everything could have been stolen," she said, claiming party documents and strategy details were being taken.

Launching a sharp attack, Banerjee alleged senior BJP leaders, including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, benefited from coal-scam proceeds. "Jagannath to Suvendu to Amit Shah, this is the chain. I have all the proof in pen drives," she said, warning she would make the evidence public.

Accusing central agencies of acting as BJP tools, Banerjee said, "All agencies have been captured," and claimed the Centre forcibly captured power in states including Maharashtra, Haryana and Bihar. Turning to the Election Commission, she alleged voter-list manipulation through the Special Intensive Revision exercise and announced the TMC would next protest in New Delhi.

She also condemned the alleged assault on eight TMC MPs during a Delhi protest, mocked the Chief Election Commissioner, rejected claims of large-scale Rohingya presence, and challenged the BJP over 2026, ending with chants of "Jai Bangla".

Several TMC MPs were detained while protesting outside the Home Ministry's office in Delhi against alleged misuse of probe agencies by the Centre. However, they were released later. *— PTI*

West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC chief Mamata Banerjee leads a protest march in Kolkata PHOTO: PTI

> Only Supreme Court can rein in ED. Every opposition state, every significant opposition leader is targeted. What is happening in West Bengal is truly disturbing! That too in the midst of an impending election. Federalism is at ED's mercy!
>
> -Kapil Sibal, Rajya Sabha MP

Mehbooba backs 'tigress' Mamata

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti on Friday described West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee as a "tigress", saying the TMC chief is "very brave" and will not surrender.
Mufti was reacting to Thursday's ED searches at the office of the political consultancy firm I-PAC and the residence of its director Pratik Jain in Kolkata. Mufti said that while such raids by ED or other investigative agencies have become a normal thing in J&K, "the whole country is tasting it now". *—PTI*

63 Naxalites surrender in Chhattisgarh

DANTEWADA, 9 JAN

As many as 63 Naxalites, 36 of them carrying a collective bounty of over Rs 1.19 crore, surrendered in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district on Friday. The cadres, including 18 women, turned themselves in before senior police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) officials here under 'Poona Margem' initiative. The Naxalites were active in south Bastar division, west Bastar division, Maad division in the state, and in areas bordering Odisha. Seven of the cadres carried a reward of Rs 8 lakh each, another seven Rs 5 lakh, 8 cadres Rs 2 lakh, 11 cadres Rs 1 lakh and three cadres Rs 50,000. They will receive an assistance of Rs 50,000 each and will be rehabilitated. *—PTI*

SEES 'OVERARCHING CONSPIRACY'

Land-for-job: Court frames charges against Lalu

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

A Delhi court on Friday ordered the framing of charges against RJD chief and former railway minister Lalu Prasad Yadav, his family members and others in the alleged 'land-for-job' scam, holding that the CBI's report disclosed an "overarching conspiracy" raising grave suspicion.

Special Judge Vishal Gogne said Yadav used the railway ministry as his "personal fiefdom", turning public employment into a bargaining chip to acquire land.

Pronouncing the order, the court rejected discharge pleas as "unwarranted", underlining that Yadav and others were "operating as a criminal enterprise to usurp land". The judge flagged an "abuse of decision" by railway officials, adding that the chargesheet captured the "essentiality and core" of the alleged criminality.

Charges were ordered against 41 accused, while 52 were discharged, including substitutes who did not part with land. Of the 103 accused named by the CBI, five have died. The matter has been posted for formal framing of charges on 23 January.

The CBI alleged that Group-D appointments in the West Central Railway's Jabalpur zone between 2004 and 2009 were made in exchange for land transferred to Yadav's family or associates.

Reacting, the BJP said the law was "catching up" with Yadav. Senior leader Ravi Shankar Prasad cited fodder scam convictions and accused him of "scams". The accused have denied the claims. *—PTI*

RJD chief and ex-railway minister Lalu Prasad being taken to the Delhi court PHOTO: ANI

Civic alliances shift as Sena, NCP sideline BJP in M'rashtra's Ambernath

THANE/PUNE, 9 JAN

In a fresh twist in Ambernath Municipal Council politics, the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena and Ajit Pawar-led NCP, along with an independent councillor, on Friday formed a bloc to stake claim to power, keeping the BJP out despite all being Mahayuti allies.

A letter formalising the combine was submitted to district authorities. The move follows the BJP's induction of 12 suspended Congress councillors and is expected to derail its plan to control the 60-member council.

After the 20 December polls, the BJP had joined hands with Congress and the NCP under the Ambernath Vikas Aghadi, sidelining the Sena, the single-largest party. With the latest realignment, the Sena-NCP-independent group now commands 32 members.

Reacting to shifting alliances, Ajit Pawar said there was a "steady erosion" of ideology, alleging parties were relying on inducements, coercion and "vendetta politics" to poach leaders.

He said civic polls were being fought on local issues, even as Mahayuti partners contested separately in Maharashtra's ongoing urban elections. *—PTI*

LS polls jolt led to 'Ladki Bahin' scheme: Ajit

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar said the Mahayuti government launched the Ladki Bahin cash transfer scheme after its Lok Sabha elections setback and consultations with Madhya Pradesh BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan. In an interview to PTI, Pawar said Rs 1,500 is paid monthly to eligible women, acknowledging fiscal strain but insisting development would not suffer. He said welfare schemes have become nationwide, citing Bihar. - PTI

Non-veg delivery banned within 15km of Ayodhya temple

AYODHYA, 9 JAN

The Ayodhya administration on Friday prohibited delivery of non-vegetarian food within a 15km radius of the Ram temple in Uttar Pradesh, following repeated complaints about online platforms supplying non-vegetarian items in areas marked under the 'Panchkosi Parikrama'. Officials also warned hotels and homestays serving non-veg food and alcohol to tourists. Despite a May 2025 municipal decision banning meat and liquor sales along the 14-km Ram Path, enforcement has been lax, with over two dozen outlets still selling alcohol, locals said. Assistant Food Commissioner Manik Chandra Singh said: "Following complaints, the ban on online non-vegetarian delivery has been imposed. Continuous monitoring will ensure compliance". *—PTI*

Rajya Sabha former MP Ripun Bora, with Congress MP Rakibul Hussain, address a press conference, at Rajiv Bhawan in Guwahati PHOTO: ANI

Assam Oppn files complaint; claims voter deletion by BJP

GUWAHATI, 9 JAN

Opposition parties in Assam filed a police complaint accusing the BJP of conspiring to delete voters' names from electoral rolls before the Assembly polls, allegations rejected by CM Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Five parties: the Congress, CPI(M), Raijor Dal, Assam Jatiya Parishad and CPI(ML)L, submitted a joint complaint at Dispur Police Station, alleging BJP president Dilip Saikia instructed MLAs and entrusted cabinet minister Ashok Singhal to facilitate deletions in 60 constituencies during a Zoom meeting on 4 January, 2026.

Calling it an "evil design" to target opposition supporters, the parties urged police to secure footage of the meeting and sought registration of a case. They also submitted a memorandum to the Chief Electoral Officer alleging anomalies in the Special Revision of electoral rolls.

The revision, as polls in March–April, will conclude with publication of final list on 10 February. Draft rolls show a 1.35 per cent rise in voters, with 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions. *—PTI*

Shah inaugurates IED data platform

GURUGRAM, 9 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated a national digital Improvised Explosive Device (IED) data management platform on Friday, describing it as a "next-generation security shield against terror" and a comprehensive deterrent against bombings in India.

Developed by the National Security Guard (NSG) in collaboration with Rashtriya Raksha University, IIT Delhi, the National Investigation Agency (NIA), and the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), the national IED data management system (NIDMS) incorporates artificial intelligence and machine learning for in-depth analysis of bombings.

Shah stated that the NIDMS would serve as a "shield" and "national asset" against terrorist incidents, providing vital data to police and investigative agencies to analyse bombing patterns. He emphasised that it represents "one nation one data repository".

NSG Director General Brighu Srinivasan highlighted the platform's unique nature, noting its real-time information exchange capabilities. The NIDMS is part of the NSG's National Bomb Data Centre, which has tracked bombings since 1999. Once operational, a new NSG hub in Ayodhya will enable rapid response across India. *— PTI*

Chennithala accuses Vijayan of 'communal divide'

KOCHI, 9 JAN

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and UDF leader Ramesh Chennithala engaged in a heated political spat on Friday.

Chennithala accused Vijayan of pursuing divisive communal politics to remain in power, claiming he is competing with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and reopening old wounds through repeated references to the Marad riots.

He alleged that CPI(M) has historically relied on the BJP to counter the Congress and dismissed reports of UDF seat-sharing talks.

Separately, Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty demanded the arrest of an Enforcement Directorate officer involved in the 2020 diplomatic gold smuggling case, recently forced into premature retirement. Sivankutty alleged the officer misused his position to target Vijayan, amass wealth, and called for a formal FIR and detailed investigation. *—PTI*

Delhi Assembly suspends 4 AAP MLAs over disorder

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Speaker Vijender Gupta on Friday suspended four AAP MLAs for the remainder of the Delhi Assembly's ongoing Winter Session, citing repeated disruption of proceedings and violation of House decorum. The suspended members are Som Dutt, Jarnail Singh, Sanjeev Jha and Kuldeep Kumar. Jha, Singh and Kumar had earlier been suspended for three days for similar conduct. Jha said he was marshaled out after demanding that BJP leaders delete social media posts linked to an alleged insult of Guru Tegh Bahadur, arguing the video was under forensic examination. The House was adjourned twice amid protests. Proceedings later resumed, with ministers addressing constituency issues and the Assembly passing supplementary demands and the Appropriation Bill. *—PTI*

CENSOR DISPUTE

HC stays clearance order for Vijay's 'Jana Nayagan'

CHENNAI, 9 JAN

The Madras High Court on Friday stayed a single judge's order directing the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to immediately grant a censor certificate to actor-turned-politician Vijay's film 'Jana Nayagan', pushing its release into uncertainty.

A Division Bench of Chief Justice MM Shrivastava and Justice G Arul Murugan granted interim stay on an appeal filed by the CBFC, hours after Justice PT Asha set aside the film board's decision to refer the film to a Revising Committee and ordered issuance of a UA certificate. The Bench said the CBFC was not given sufficient opportunity to file its reply and posted the matter for further hearing on 21 January. Appearing for the CBFC, Additional Solicitor General ARL Sundaresan and Solicitor General Tushar Mehta argued that the Chairperson was entitled to order a review citing references to the Army and religious sentiments.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing KVN Productions, said the review was ordered on a complaint by a panel member despite a majority recommending certification, forcing the producer to approach court as the film was scheduled for release on 9 January.

TVK alleges political motive

Reacting sharply, TVK legal wing coordinator R Chakravarthi called the delay "deliberate" and said any appeal would "anger the people of Tamil Nadu". Alleging political intent to stall Vijay's success, he claimed CBFC cited no specific objectionable scenes, terming the objections as a "false pretext". *—PTI*

Jaishankar meets French Prez, appreciates collab

PARIS, 9 JAN

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met with French President Emmanuel Macron and discussed contemporary global developments and appreciated his "positive sentiments for our Strategic Partnership".

Jaishankar, who is on a six-day visit to France and Luxembourg, also addressed the Ambassadors' Conference of France on Thursday.

"Delighted to call on President@EmmanuelMacron of France today and convey warm wishes of PM @narendramodi," Jaishankar said in a social media post.

"Deeply appreciate his perspectives on contemporary global developments and positive sentiments for our Strategic Partnership," he added.

The external affairs minister, in another post on X, said it was an honour to address the Ambassadors' Conference of France.

"Underlined contemporary global shifts driven by trade, finance, technology, energy, resources and connectivity. Changes in mindset have been the crucial factor," he said. *—PTI*

Tiger found dead in MP, second one in two days

UMARIA, 9 JAN

A tiger was found dead in a well located inside the Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve (BTR) in Umaria district of Madhya Pradesh, a forest official said on Friday. This is the second death of a big cat in the reserve in two days as the carcass of a female tiger cub was found in Kathli beat of the BTR on Wednesday, presumably after a fight with a wild animal. "The carcass of an adult tiger was found inside an old well on Thursday evening in Kudri Tola village of Raipur, under the Dhamokhar range of the reserve. On receiving the information, park officials and a team from the forest department reached and inspected the spot," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Former soldier loses ₹98L in digital scam

BILASPUR, 9 JAN

A retired soldier from Bilaspur was duped of Rs 98 lakh after cyber fraudsters kept him under "digital arrest" for 15 days, police said on Friday. The accused posed as CBI, RBI and court officials, alleging his involvement in money laundering and staging fake court hearings through video calls. Intimidated, the victim deposited money into multiple accounts. An FIR has been registered at Mandi cyber police station. Meanwhile, the Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit of the Delhi Police busted a digital arrest syndicate and arrested five men, including two private bank employees, for cheating an 80-year-old man of around Rs 1 crore. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ex-MP minister's daughter killed in road mishap

INDORE, 9 JAN

Three persons, including Prerna Bachchan, daughter of former Madhya Pradesh home minister and Rajpur MLA Bala Bachchan, were killed in a road accident near Indore early Friday, police said. The crash occurred near Ralamandal on the Tejaji Nagar bypass when a car collided with a truck. Two youths, Man Sandhu and Prakhar, also died on the spot, while another woman was seriously injured. The truck driver has been detained as police investigate. Leaders Kamal Nath and Umang Singhar expressed grief. *— PTI*

Swaroop now Special Secretary of Internal Security

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the appointment of senior IPS officer Anand Swaroop as the new Special Secretary (Internal Security) in place of incumbent Praveen Vashista, a government order said. Swaroop, a 1992-batch IPS officer from the Uttar Pradesh cadre, is currently working as DG(I), National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). The order said his tenure will be from the date of assumption of charge till 31 August, 2029, the date of his superannuation or until further orders, whichever is earlier. The ACC also cleared the appointment of 1994-batch IPS Anupama Nilekar Chandra, working as Special Director General at Sashastra Seema Bal, as Director General (Investigation) at the NHRC in place of Swaroop. *— PTI*

Sharmila's plea on dogs is cut off from reality: SC

Court refuses to go into harassment of women dog feeders

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Sharmila Tagore's lawyer said aggressive dogs could improve with treatment

PHOTO: SALAR

The Supreme Court continued to hear pleas seeking changes to its earlier directions on the handling of stray dogs, during which it took a stern view of submissions made on behalf of actor Sharmila Tagore.

Appearing through counsel, Tagore's side argued on Friday that policies governing stray dogs could not follow a "one size fits all" approach.

The issue, the lawyer said, needed to be examined through the lens of science and psychology. While conceding that the existing Animal Birth Control (ABC) rules were not flawless, the counsel maintained that they should be reviewed instead of scrapping them.

The counsel said some aggressive dogs could show improvement with treatment, although it was also accepted that aggression could resurface. Such cases, he said, ought to be properly identified by designated committees. He also referred to practices in other countries, suggesting measures such as colour-coded collars to flag dogs with a history of biting.

The court, however, sharply questioned these arguments, cautioning lawyers against making comparisons without accounting for India's realities. The bench repeatedly underlined the need to remain practical.

The Supreme Court also took apart one by one the examples that Tagore gave to support her arguments against moves to fix the problem of strays in public areas.

"You are completely cut off from reality. Don't try to glorify dogs wanndering in hospitals," the SC said after her lawyer gave the example of a friendly dog that has been living on the AIIMS campus for many years. The SC said it would not go into the harassment of women dog feeders by anti-feeder vigilantes as it was a law and order issue.

The SC also refused to go into the claims about certain derogatory remarks being made about women in the issue. The bench observed that there were many videos of dogs attacking children and the elderly. .

The hearing in the matter would continue in the SC on 13 January. *—PTI*

Include Romeo-Juliet clause in POCSO, says Supreme Court

The Supreme Court asked the Centre to end the misuse of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act by introducing a "Romeo-Juliet" clause to exempt "genuine adolescent relationships." The SC also held that the HCs cannot order medical age determination of victims at the bail stage in POCSO cases. Quashing an Allahabad HC order, the SC held on Friday that the HC's order to medically determine the age of victims at the bail stage exceeded CrPC Section 439 (grant of bail). — PTI

ED FILES MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

SIT arrests Sabarimala chief priest in gold case

T'PURAM, 9 JAN

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the Sabarimala gold loss case arrested chief priest of the Lord Ayyappa temple, Kandararu Rajeevaru, here on Friday, sources said.

Rajeevaru was questioned at an undisclosed location in the morning and later shifted to the SIT office in the afternoon, where his arrest was formally recorded, sources said.

Officials said the arrest was made based on statements given by prime accused Unnikrishnan Potty and former Travancore Devaswom Board president Padmakumar.

The Special Investigation Team found that Rajeevaru had close links with Potty and had recommended the re-plating of the Dwarapalaka (guardian deity) plates and the Sreekovil (sanctum sanctorum) doorframe plates at the temple.

Later, when the Travancore Devaswom Board sought his permission for the re-plating, Rajeevaru had granted his approval, officials said.

SIT officials said Rajeevaru had been questioned earlier as part of the investigation.

He is the 11th person to be arrested in the case after the Kerala High Court constituted the SIT to probe the gold loss incident.

Meanwhile, the Enforcement Directorate filed a money laundering case on Friday in the Sabarimala gold loss case in Kerala, official sources said.

The probe agency registered an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR), an ED equivalent of a police FIR, under various sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. The politically sensitive case is already being investigated by a state SIT under the supervision of the Kerala High Court. *—PTI*

HC flags phones, charging points in Goa's Colvale jail

PANAJI, 9 JAN

The Bombay High Court at Goa expressed its dismay at the discovery of mobile charging points installed within the Central Jail at Colvale, North Goa, without the knowledge or consent of prison authorities. Justice Shreeram V Shirsat highlighted this issue in a recent order while addressing the smuggling of mobile phones and contraband into the facility. The judge called for the installation of a robust jammer network to prevent such occurrences.

The court's remarks came during a hearing involving Chandu Patil, incarcerated for allegedly murdering a child and who reportedly threatened the victim's family from within the jail.

"Some swift, comprehensive, remedial and stringent measures are required to ensure that such incidents do not occur in future," the judge stated.

The order also remarked that the presence of mobile charging points in the jail "further shocks the conscience," raising questions about the effectiveness of inspections conducted by prison staff. The court noted the ongoing issues of smuggling, asserting, "Merely taking action against one jail inmate will not be a definitive solution."

Emphasising accountability, the judge insisted that the jail's deputy superintendent or superintendent must implement operational phone jammers exclusively within the jail. Furthermore, the court mandated the installation of CCTV cameras at inspection counters and in meeting areas, emphasising the preservation of daily footage for review by law enforcement. *— PTI*

CBI, ED oppose Michel on UAE extradition treaty

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

The CBI and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) have strongly opposed a plea filed by Christian Michel James before the Delhi High Court, challenging the applicability of the India-UAE Extradition Treaty, terming the petition a misuse of the legal process and an attempt to reopen issues already settled by constitutional courts. The CBI argued that Michel is repeatedly raising questions that have been decided by both the Delhi High Court and the SC.

The Central Bureau of Investigation said that Michel's extradition from the UAE was carried out in accordance with the law and only after he exhausted all legal remedies in UAE courts.

Relying on the findings of the Dubai Supreme Court, the CBI said that Michel was extradited for misuse of position, money laundering, and fraud. *— PTI*

1 MORE ARRESTED

Section 163 imposed near Delhi mosque, security tightened

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) has been imposed around Faiz-e-Ilahi Mosque in Delhi, restricting gatherings following the recent stone-pelting incident near the Turkman Gate area.

The Delhi police have appealed to people to offer their prayers at home.

The stone pelting occurred following a demolition drive by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) near the mosque on 7 January, following orders of the Delhi High Court.

In view of Friday prayers, the Delhi Police has deployed over 1,000 police personnel outside the mosque and in the surrounding areas. Moreover, paramilitary forces and anti-riot vehicles were also stationed near the mosque to prevent any untoward incident.

Meanwhile, the police on Friday arrested one more suspect in the stone-pelting incident, taking the total number of arrests in the case to 12.

"We have arrested one Mohd Imran, 36. Further investigation is underway. Security will remain tight in the area," additional commissioner of police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said.

The police earlier arrested 11 people in connection with the stone-pelting incident. 30 individuals have been identified for their alleged involvement in the violence through CCTV footage and viral videos circulating on social media.

Police teams have launched raids at multiple locations to take the remaining suspects into custody. The police will also summon Samajwadi Party MP Mohibbullah Nadvi over his presence at the site shortly before the violence broke out. *—PTI/ANI*

Security personnel on guard during Friday prayers after an anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi

PHOTO: PTI

U'khand orders CBI probe into Ankita case

DEHRADUN, 9 JAN

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami recommended a CBI inquiry on Friday into the 2022 murder of 19-year-old resort receptionist Ankita Bhandari, and said that the state government's intention is completely clear that no fact or evidence should be overlooked.

Dhami announced during a recent meeting with her parents, that they had requested a CBI probe into the matter, and respecting their sentiments, the Uttarakhand government has recommended the inquiry.

Ankita's father, Virendra Singh Bhandari, and mother, Soni Devi, met Dhami on Wednesday and handed him a letter demanding an enquiry by the CBI into the case under the supervision of a Supreme Court Judge.

In the letter, Ankita's father said that his daughter was murdered because of a 'VIP' whose identity is still unknown.

The government's objective has been and will continue to be to ensure justice, the chief minister said.

Considering the seriousness of the case, the state government had initiated immediate action in the matter, constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) under a female IPS officer, the chief minister said.

All the suspects involved in the case were arrested promptly, and effective and strong legal representation was ensured by his government, which resulted in a lower court granting life imprisonment to the three convicts in the case.

He said the case clearly demonstrates that the government has ensured justice. *—PTI*

Stepmom burns child's privates in Kerala, held

PALAKKAD, 9 JAN

A five-year-old girl's private parts were allegedly injured with a hot steel spatula by her stepmother for bedwetting, police said here on Friday.

The incident occurred near Kanjikode in the north Kerala district last week and came to light after the child's Anganwadi teacher noticed that she was having difficulty sitting down in the class, police said.

The Anganwadi teacher informed the police, which arrested the stepmother, a native of Bihar, on Thursday, and she was remanded to judicial custody for 14 days.

The woman has been booked under the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhitha and the Juvenile Justice Act, police said.

The child, whose father is a citizen of Nepal and works at a hotel, is currently under the care of the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), police said. *— PTI*

'Oceans stored record high heat in 2025'

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Heat stored in Earth's oceans broke records in 2025, with the energy in the upper two kilometres increasing by an estimated 23 zettajoules, roughly 200 times the world's electrical energy consumption in 2023, according to a study.

Thirty three per cent of the world's ocean expanse reached the top three warmest values since modern measurements began, an international team of researchers, led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences said.

Water expands due to a rise in ocean heat, driving a sea level increase around the world. The extra heat in oceans also intensifies extreme weather by increasing heat and moisture in the atmosphere, they added.

Oceans can be expected to continue breaking records until the world reaches net zero greenhouse gas emissions, the team said.

Datasets including those maintained at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the US' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) were analysed. *— PTI*

MOVE TO PLEASE KIDS

Lighter schoolbags, no backbenchers in Kerala

T'PURAM, 9 JAN

Students trudging to school burdened with a heavy backpack and the presence of 'backbenchers,' a word often associated with children who don't focus on in studies, were accepted things in the education sector, but not for long in Kerala.

A draft report proposing a reduction in the weight of school bags and creating classrooms without 'backbenchers' has been approved by the State Curriculum Steering Committee, General Education Minister V Sivankutty said in a statement.

He said the aim of the proposals is to ensure the physical and mental health of children by reducing the weight of the bags they carry to school and to create a learning environment without 'backbenchers' as part of the "democratisation" of classrooms.

He said the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) was asked to study these proposals in detail and the draft report prepared by it has been approved by the committee.

Sivankutty said it has been decided to invite public comments on the draft report to ensure the participation of society in the education process.

The report will be made available on the SCERT website and teachers, parents, students and the general public can submit their suggestions on the issue till 20 January, he said.

He said the Department of General Education aims to implement these changes in schools in the next academic year, after examining the suggestions and recommendations of the public. *— PTI*

BITING COLD

A man walks past icicles hanging from a structure amid heavy frost and snow during a severe cold wave in Anantnag of Jammu and Kashmir. Meanwhile, Srinagar city recorded its coldest night of the season, with temperatures plunging to minus 6 degrees Celsius as biting cold wave has gripped large parts of North India and is expected to persist till 11 January. Dense fog was reported across Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh. Delhi-NCR also witnessed surprise rainfall, even as cold and fog worsened air pollution ***PHOTO: PTI***

44% Indian cities face chronic air pollution: Report

- Nearly 44 per cent Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes, an analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found.

Nearly 44 per cent Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes, an analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has found.

However, only 4 per cent of these cities are covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP), the report said.

Using satellite data, CREA assessed PM2.5 levels in 4,041 Indian cities.

"Out of 4,041, at least 1,787 cities exceeded the national annual PM2.5 standard every year across five recent years (2019-2024), excluding the Covid-affected year of 2020. This means nearly 44 per cent of Indian cities face chronic air pollution, indicating a structural problem driven by persistent emission sources rather than short-term episodes," the report said.

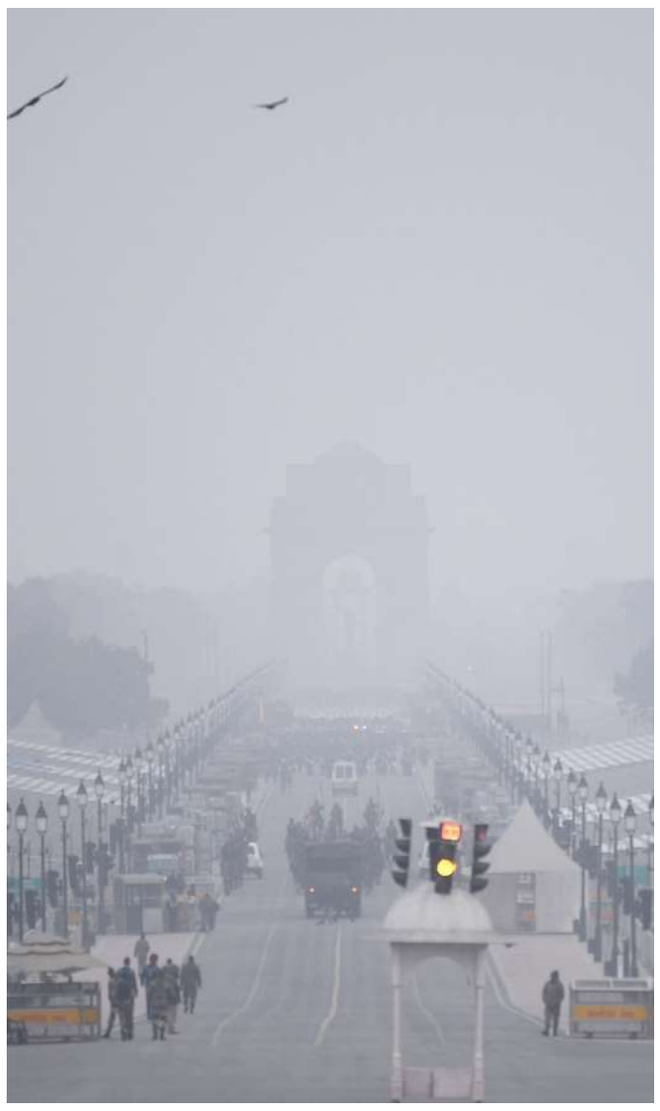
The PM2.5 assessment for 2025 ranks Byrnihat (Assam), Delhi, and Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh) as India's top three most polluted cities with annual concentrations of 100 µg/m³, 96 µg/m³, and 93 µg/m³, respectively.

Noida is the fourth on the list, followed by Gurugram, Greater Noida, Bhiwadi, Hajipur, Muzaffarnagar, and Hapur.

"Yet, India's flagship NCAP covers only a fraction of this burden. Just 130 cities were included under NCAP, and only 67 overlap with the 1,787 persistently non-attainment cities. As a result, NCAP currently addresses only 4 per cent of India's chronically polluted cities, leaving the vast majority outside targeted clean air action," it added.

Non-attainment cities are urban areas identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) that consistently fail to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) over several years.

The report noted that Uttar Pradesh tops the list with 416 non-attainment cities, followed by Rajasthan (158), Gujarat (152), Madhya Pradesh (143), Punjab and Bihar (136 each) and West Bengal (124).



A view of Kartavya Path engulfed in dense smog as Republic Day Parade 2026 rehearsals are underway in New Delhi on Monday ***PHOTO: ANI***

Out of 130 NCAP cities, 28 still lack continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations (CAAQMS), and among the 102 cities with stations, 100 cities reported 80 per cent or higher PM10 levels.

"Progress on PM10 control remains mixed. Twenty-three cities have achieved the revised 40 per cent PM10 reduction target, 28 cities have recorded 21-40 per cent reduction, 26 cities show modest improvements of 1-20 per cent, while 23 cities have in fact experienced an increase in PM10 levels since the programme's inception," the report said.

"For PM10, Delhi tops the list with an annual average of 197 µg/m³, three times the national standard. Ghaziabad and Greater Noida follow with averages of 190 µg/m³ and 188 µg/m³, respectively.

Rajasthan has the highest number of cities in the Top 50 in terms of PM10 concentration, 18 in total, followed by Uttar Pradesh (10), Madhya Pradesh (5), and Bihar and Odisha (four each)," the report said.

According to Manoj Kumar, India Analyst, CREA, strengthening the country's air quality governance through targeted, science-based reforms may be the only way forward.

"This means prioritising PM2.5 and its precursor gases (sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide) over PM10, revising the list of non-attainment cities under NCAP, setting stricter emission standards for industries and power plants, allocating funding based on source apportionment studies, and adopting an airshed-based approach to address air pollution at a regional scale," he said .

Since the programme's inception, Rs 13,415 crore has been released under the NCAP and 15th Finance Commission grants, of which Rs 9,929 crore (74 per cent) has been utilised.

Road dust management accounts for 68 per cent of spending, followed by transport (14 per cent) and waste and biomass burning (12 per cent), while industries, domestic fuel use, public outreach (each less than 1 per cent), and capacity building and monitoring (3 per cent) received limited allocations. *—PTI*

SALAR

Pratik Jain's rise from Modi's war room to Didi's lieutenant

Buried deep in an old Facebook album lies a photograph dated 16 May, 2014, of a faintly smiling young man standing with colleagues beside a triumphant Narendra Modi, the day the BJP-led NDA swept to power, its moment captured in a caption that reads, almost prophetically, "Picture of the year for me."

More than a decade later, that young man, Pratik Jain - the cofounder of I-PAC, stands at the other end of India's political spectrum: the principal strategist of the Trinamool Congress, publicly described by Mamata Banerjee as her party's IT and strategy in-charge, and firmly in the BJP's line of political fire in West Bengal.

Only a few backroom operatives in contemporary Indian politics embody such sharp ideological contrast and such continuity of method.

Those who work closely with Jain say patience is not a slogan for him but a political instrument: a way of outlasting crises, waiting out public anger, allowing narratives to burn themselves out.

That instinct, they add, was forged long before he entered Bengal's political bloodstream.

In 2013, as the BJP prepared to project Modi as its prime ministerial face, Jain was part of the core backroom team led by Prashant Kishor. Then a little-known data and communications specialist, he earned a reputation among insiders not just for electoral arithmetic but for behavioural reading, how leaders appeared on camera, how anger travelled through television screens, how impatience could undo weeks of messaging.

Jain has never spoken publicly about those days. He rarely speaks publicly about anything.

What is known is that he belonged to the inner circle that helped shape BJP's 2014 campaign persona -- controlled, restrained, disciplined -- at a time when optics mattered as much as oratory.

Born in Jharkhand, Jain entered IIT Bombay in 2008, graduating with a BTech in metallurgical engineering and material science. His early career was far removed from politics: a stint as a trainee in a private bank, followed by work as a data analyst with a multinational company from 2012.

Politics, for Jain, came through process rather than ideology.

In 2013, he founded Citizens for Accountable Governance, a data-driven initiative that soon merged into what would become the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC). After Modi became the prime minister, Jain co-founded I-PAC, emerging quietly as its operational brain, less visible than its public face Kishor, but no less central.

His entry into West Bengal was cautious. Over the past six years, he has become indispensable.

From scripting the TMC's digital and ground narrative in the 2021 Assembly elections to steering its messaging through the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Jain has been the party's unseen constant. Maps of India and West Bengal line his office walls; booth-level data, demographics and leader assessments are committed to memory.

When Kishor later moved on to chart his own political course, the transition inside I-PAC was seamless.

Jain's remit today goes well beyond elections into governance messaging, scheme prioritisation, campaign aesthetics and candidate shortlisting.

Within both the party and the government, he functions as a bridge.

On Thursday, when Enforcement Directorate teams searched Jain's Loudon Street residence and his Salt Lake office in an old coal-linked money laundering case, the political stakes escalated instantly. Banerjee herself appeared at the sites, an unmistakable signal of trust.

Despite his influence, Jain avoids the spotlight. Credit is routinely passed on to colleagues. He maintains no visible faction within the TMC, no personal coterie.

That temperament surfaced recently in an unusually reflective LinkedIn post, where Jain wrote about resisting the urge to "optimise" even rest.

"We've glorified productivity so much," he wrote, "that taking a break feels like losing." Rest, he argued, was not a hack but a reminder "that you're human, not a machine."

Those who work with him see the same philosophy at play in politics -- knowing when not to act, when to let noise settle, when to allow exhaustion to overtake outrage. "You can't speed-run recovery," he wrote. "You can't optimise your way out of exhaustion."

In an era of loud consultants and louder claims, Jain's power lies in his silence. The Facebook photograph from 2014 remains frozen in time, a reminder of where he began.

Today, as Bengal heads towards another high-stakes Assembly election, the strategist who once helped script the BJP's rise is practising patience once again -- this time at the heart of Mamata Banerjee's political machine.

By the end of another long, politically charged day, those who know him well say Jain is likely to return to the same private mantra that has followed him across ideologies and elections: "Patience is the key". *—PTI*

TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee has described I-PAC chief Prateek Jain as the party's IT and strategy in-charge. He is also a key strategist of the TMC and works closely with her nephew, Abhishek Banerjee ***PHOTO: X/@PRATIKJAINIPAC***

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Yunus has aligned with religious extremists: Taslima Nasrin

Bangladeshi-Swedish writer Taslima Nasrin on Friday hit out at the Bangladesh government, alleging that its Chief Advisor, Muhammad Yunus, has aligned himself with "religious extremists and empowered forces of division" in that country.

Speaking on the topic of 'Book for Peace' at the 4th Kerala Legislative Assembly International Book Festival (KLIBF), Nasrin also alleged that Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, was "promoting agendas that threaten secularism and the safety of ordinary citizens."

She said that the Nobel Peace Prize does not define peace, power does. "And power rarely cares about the truth," Nasrin said. She noted that Henry Kissinger, the 56th US Secretary of State, received the Peace Prize, but "his policies left countries burning and his strategies erased villages." Similarly, Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize winner and former Myanmar foreign minister, had not stood with the Rohingyas when they were driven out of the country, Nasrin claimed. "She chose power over humanity," she said.

Regarding the situation in her home country, she said that when "certain religious fanatics and extremists" threatened her life and issued fatwas against her in connection with her books, the then-Bangladesh government took no action against them and instead issued an arrest warrant against her. "Had the government acted against the fanatics and jihadists then, this country (Bangladesh) would not be in such a bad state now. The government used religion for its political interests and to stay in power as long as possible," she said.

She also accused the Bangladesh government of building religious schools to gain the support of fanatics "to stay in power longer," instead of establishing secular educational institutions and science academies.

Blaming the interim government for the current crisis, she said, "The fundamentalists are in power, and Dr Yunus is supporting them. I do not know how we will restore this secular country for which it fought against Pakistan in 1971."

"Now the nation is divided, and Muslim extremists are killing and persecuting religious minority communities. This must be stopped," she added. Later, on the sidelines of the event, Nasrin told reporters that past heads of state in Bangladesh Hossain Mohammad Ershad, Khaleda Zia, and Sheikh Hasinaencouraged the growth of religious extremism in the country.

Taslima Nasrin also alleged that Mohammed Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, was promoting agendas that threaten secularism and the safety of ordinary citizens ***PHOTO: X / PTI***

"It is their fault. They unnecessarily built mosques and madrasas. These are factories of jihadists. If they grow, they attack women and minorities. And it is happening now," she alleged.

She claimed the situation was "very bad for Hindus in Bangladesh and accused Yunus of taking no action against the killers, the fundamentalists and jihadis." Nasrin expressed hope that the next election in the country would be "true" and that things would change only if a pro-secular party came to power. However, she expressed concern that the largest political party in Bangladesh, the Awami League, was banned while Jamaat-e-Islami was gaining strength."If Jamaat-e-Islami comes to power, they will likely establish Sharia law, and women and religious minorities will suffer greatly," she said.

Asked whether the alleged persecution of Muslims in India was affecting Bangladesh, Nasrin denied it. "No, I don't think India has anything to do with the Bangladeshi killings.

Hindus have been persecuted since 1947. It is not a reaction to events in India. There has always been an anti-Hindu mentality among certain fundamentalists and jihadis, and they are growing with the support of different governments," she said.

Asked if secularism in India was under threat, Nasrin again denied it. "India is still a secular state, but Bangladesh, which was once secular, became a state with Islam as the official religion in the 1980s. When you make a state religion, all non-Muslims become second-class citizens. We want secularism back in the Constitution. If political parties use religion for political gain, the country will be destroyed," she said. Nasrin added that, just as people fought against the Islamic regime in Iran, Bangladesh must also resist religious extremism. The writer also highlighted the plight of Hindu women in Bangladesh, citing a lack of laws to prevent polygamy, allow divorce, or permit inheritance from their fathers, and called for a Uniform Civil Code.

COMMUNAL INCIDENTS IN B'DESH MUST BE DEALT WITH FIRMLY: INDIA

India on Friday called on Bangladesh to firmly deal with communal incidents in that country.

New Delhi's reaction came against the backdrop of the killing of at least five Hindu men in hostile circumstances in Bangladesh in the last few weeks.

"We continue to witness a disturbing pattern of recurring attacks on minorities as well as their homes and businesses by extremists," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

Such communal incidents need to be dealt with swiftly and firmly, he said.

"We have observed a troubling tendency to attribute such incidents to personal rivalries, political differences, or extraneous reasons," Jaiswal said. "Such disregard only emboldens the perpetrators and deepens the sense of fear and insecurity among minorities," he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: TASS

China, Russia, Iran warships arrive in S Africa for drills

CAPE TOWN, 9 JAN

Chinese, Russian and Iranian warships arrived in South African waters for a week of naval drills starting Friday off the coast of Cape Town as geopolitical tensions run high over the US intervention in Venezuela and its move to seize tankers carrying Venezuelan oil. The Chinese-led drills were organised last year under the BRICS bloc of developing nations and South Africa's armed forces said they will bring members of the bloc together to practice maritime safety and anti-piracy operations and "deepen cooperation." China, Russia and South Africa are members of BRICS, while Iran joined it in 2024. It was unclear if other BRICS countries, would take part.—PTI

Syria declares ceasefire after clashes with Kurds

ALEPPO, 9 JAN

Syria's Defence Ministry announced a ceasefire on Friday after three days of clashes between government forces and Kurdish fighters in the northern city of Aleppo that displaced tens of thousands of people. The statement said the ceasefire was effective at 3am in the neighbourhoods of Sheikh Maqsoud, Achrafieh and Bani Zaid and gave armed groups six hours to leave the area. It said departing militants would be allowed to carry their "personal light weapons" and would be provided with an escort to the country's northeast region, which is controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. There was no immediate public response from the SDF, and it was not clear if Kurdish forces had agreed to the deal. —PTI

Lanka to revive cases stalled by previous govt

COLOMBO, 9 JAN

Sixty-five of the 102 cases withdrawn between 2019 and 2024 have been refiled and all such stalled actions against former regime members for wrong doings would be revived, Sri Lanka's parliament was told on Friday. "We will not spare anyone, like in the case of the former president Ranil Wickremesinghe. We follow a system to do them correctly," Prime Minister Harini Amarasuriya said. All stalled cases against members of the previous governments for wrong doings would be revived, she added. The Prime Minister was answering a question put forward by the Opposition claiming that former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's case, which was filed for bribery and corruption has not been revived. His trial was stopped in 2019.—PTI

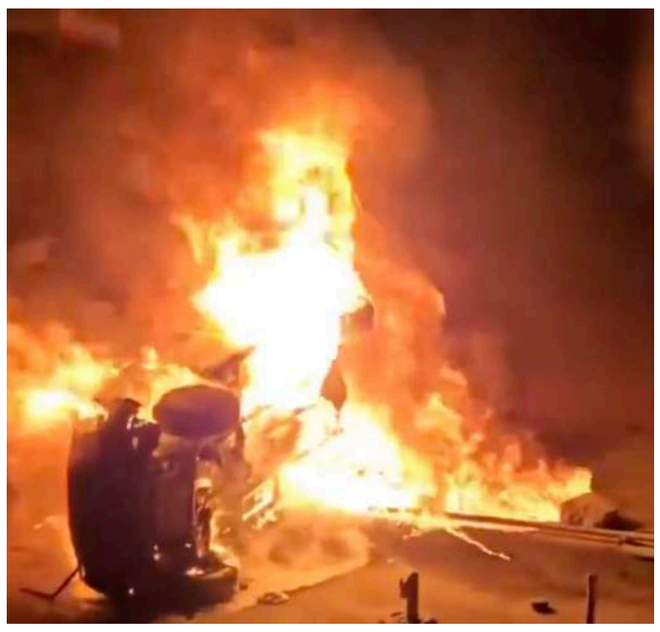
Musk's xAI plans $20B data centre in Mississippi

JACKSON, 9 JAN

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence company xAI is set to spend USD 20 billion to build a data centre in Southaven, Mississippi, Gov. Tate Reeves has announced, calling it the largest private investment. The data centre, called MACROHARDRR, is being built in Mississippi's DeSoto County near Memphis, Tennessee. It will be the third data centre to be established by the company in the greater Memphis area. xAI CFO Anthony Armstrong said the cluster of data centres will house "the world's largest supercomputer" with two gigawatts of computing power. Notably, the NAACP and the Southern Environmental Law Center have raised concerns over air pollution being generated by xAI's supercomputer facility located near areas predominantly inhabited by Black communities in Memphis. —PTI

Iran: Protesters are Trump's agents

Exiled prince emerges as public figure as Trump says Khamenei will flee



The protests in Iran stem from the falling currency, which traded at 1.5 million Rials to 1 USD PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

DUBAI, 9 JAN

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Friday that security forces would crack down on protesters, adding that they were acting on behalf on US President Donald Trump.

Khamenei spoke briefly on state TV amid the nationwide communication blackout.

Protesters are "ruining their own streets ... in order to please the president of the United States," Khamenei said to a crowd at his compound in Tehran. "Because he said that he would come to their aid. He should pay attention to the state of his own country instead."

Iranian state media aired footage of chanting "Death to America".

"Our nation does not tolerate mercenaryism for foreigners. Whoever you may be, once you become a mercenary for a foreigner, once you work for a foreigner, the nation considers you rejected," Khamenei said. "As for that fellow (Trump) who sits there with arrogance and pride, passing judgment on the whole world, he should also know that usually, the despots and arrogant powers of the world--such as Pharaoh, Nimrod, Reza Khan, Mohammad Reza, and the likes of them--were overthrown exactly when they were at the peak of their pride. This one will be overthrown as well."

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei PHOTO: PTI

Earlier on Thursday, Trump reiterated his threat to militarily intervene, adding that the "enthusiasm to overturn the regime has been incredible". Trump also said that Khamenei is looking to flee.

Meanwhile, despite being in exile for 50 years, Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi has returned to the forefront of Iranian politics. He stood by the protesters and demanded that they overthrow the "regime".

"Iranians demanded their freedom tonight. In response, the regime in Iran has cut all lines of communication," Pahlavi said.

"I want to thank the leader of the free world, President Trump, for reiterating his promise to hold the regime to account. Others, including European leaders must follow him," he said. —*Agencies*

Israel kills 13 in Gaza ahead of 'Board of Peace'

DEIR AL-BALAH, 9 JAN

Israeli strikes across Gaza killed at least 13 people, according to health officials, as US President Donald Trump was expected to announce the Board of Peace to oversee the fragile ceasefire.

Health officials and family members said at least one child was among the dead in northern Gaza following several strikes there as well as east of Gaza City.

Israel's army said Friday it struck Hamas infrastructure and fighters in southern and northern Gaza in response to a failed projectile launched by militants from the Gaza City area.

The phased ceasefire between Israel and Hamas remains in its initial stage as efforts continue to recover the remains of the final hostage in Gaza. Trump is expected to announce the Board of Peace, which he will head, marking an important step forward for his Mideast peace plan. —*PTI*

Don to hit Mexican cartels on land

WASHINGTON, 9 JAN

US President Donald Trump said that his administration will soon start targeting drug cartels by land in Mexico.

His comments on Thursday come after US strikes on alleged drug boats in the Pacific and Caribbean killed at least 100 people before the Washington arrested Venezuelan leader Nicholas Maduro

"We've knocked out 97 per cent of the drugs coming in by water, and we are gonna start now hitting land, with regard to the cartels," Trump said on Fox News. "The cartels are running Mexico. It's very, very sad to watch and see what's happened to that country."

GREENLAND OR NATO?

Trump told the New York Times that "ownership" of Greenland is important, acknowledging that it might come at the expense of NATO.

"Ownership gives you things and elements that you can't get from just signing a document," he said. ""Because that's what I feel is psychologically needed for success."

> **I don't need international law... My own morality. My own mind. It's the only thing that can stop me**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

> **There is a real threat of US military action against Colombia.... US ICE agents are acting like Nazi brigades**
>
> —Gustavo Petro, Colombia's President

US SEIZES ANOTHER OIL TANKER

US forces boarded another oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea, military officials said, as the Trump administration continues to target sanctioned tankers travelling to and from Venezuela.

The Olina is the fifth tanker to be seized by the US. It is reportedly owned by Hong Kong-based company Tantye Peur.

Earlier, the US had seized a Russian-flagged ship about 190 miles off Iceland's southern coast in the North Atlantic.

Trump refused to clarify whether he had spoken with Russian President Vladimir Putin after the incident, but said noted that Russia had deployed a submarine and destroyer to protect the ship.

"They both left very quickly when we arrived," Trump said. Two of the Russians aboard the Marinera, renamed from Bella 1, had be released. The fate of the three Indian is unclear. —*Agencies*

MACHADO TO VISIT WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK, SAYS TRUMP

Trump said that Venezuelan Opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado is likely to visit Washington, DC, next week. "I look forward to saying hello to her, and I've heard that she wants to do that." Trump had earlier said that she doesn't have public support to be the Venezuelan President.

VENEZUELA RELEASES MANY JAILED OPPOSITION FIGURES

Venezuela released a number of imprisoned high-profile opposition figures, activists and journalists — both citizens and foreigners —in what the government described as a gesture to "seek peace". Trump said that the US requested it. Among those released was Biaggio Pilieri and Enrique Márquez.

US TO GIVE $45M TO PRESERVE THAI-CAMBODIA CEASEFIRE

The US State Department said that the government would provide USD 45 million in aid packages to Thailand and Cambodia to ensure regional stability. Of this USD 10 million will be for demining the border area – which instigated the December clashes that killed over 100 people and displaced thousands.

The directive is part of a Cold War era rule from 1952, which requires soldiers to immediately attack foreign forces PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

Shoot first, question later: Denmark on US invasion

WASHINGTON, 9 JAN

Denmark and Greenland's envoys met US lawmakers in Washington as the Danish Defence Ministry issued an order to "shoot first, ask questions later" in the event of the US invading Greenland.

The "shoot first, ask questions later' directive is part of a Cold War-era rule from 1952, which reportedly mandates soldiers to "immediately take up the fight" against any foreign force.

Denmark's ambassador, Jesper Møller Sørensen, and Jacob Isbosethsen, Greenland's chief representative to Washington, met on Thursday with White House National Security Council officials to discuss a renewed push by US President Donald Trump to acquire Greenland, perhaps by military force, according to Danish government officials.

The envoys have also held a series of meetings this week with American lawmakers as they look to enlist help in persuading Trump to back off his threat. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is expected to meet with Danish officials next week. —*Agencies*

Buildings razed during the massive strike on Ukraine by Russia that killed four people and injured many PHOTO: UKRAINE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Russia bombs Ukraine with Oreshnik missile

MOSCOW/KYIV, 9 JAN

Russia said Friday it has used the new Oreshnik ballistic missile along with other weapons in a massive strike on Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials said four people were killed and at least 22 wounded in the capital overnight. Russia didn't say where Oreshnik hit, but Russian media and military bloggers said it targeted a huge underground natural gas storage in Ukraine's western Lviv region. The area is near a military base in neighbouring Poland that serves as a key hub for ferrying Western military supplies to Kyiv.

Nearly 1 million people were left without power and water after Russian strikes on Thursday.

Russia's Defence Ministry said the attack was a retaliation to Ukrainian drone strike on Russian President Vladimir Putin's residence last month. However, Ukraine and US President Donald Trump have said Kyiv didn't attack Putin's home.

Lviv Mayor Andriy Sadoviy said that Russia struck critical infrastructure with a ballistic missile, but didn't give details. . The attack took place just hours after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy alerted the nation about Russia's intentions for a large-scale offensive. —*PTI*

THE DEVASTATING ORESHNIK

- The Oreshnik missile, capable of carrying nuclear warhead, cannot be intercepted.
- Its multiple warheads plunge at speeds of up to Mach 10, or 13,000kmph, and can't be intercepted. Even regular strikes can be as devastating as a nuclear attack.
- At a range of 5,000km, It can strikes targets across Europe and even reach the US West Coast.

Federal immigration officers shoot at 2 people in Portland

PORTLAND, 9 JAN

Federal immigration officers shot and wounded two people in a vehicle outside a hospital in Portland, Oregon, on Thursday, a day after an ICE officer shot and killed a US citizen in Minnesota, authorities said.

The Department of Homeland Security described the vehicle's passenger as "a Venezuelan illegal alien affiliated with the transnational Tren de Aragua prostitution ring" who had been involved in a recent shooting in Portland.

When agents identified themselves to the occupants during a "targeted vehicle stop" Thursday afternoon, the driver tried to run them over, the department said. The agent fired in self-defence, the department said.

People protest in Kansas City during a rally for Renee Good, who was fatally shot by an ICE officer in Minneapolis PHOTO: PTI

- When agents identified themselves to the occupants during a "targeted vehicle stop" Thursday afternoon, the driver tried to run them over, the department said.

Meanwhile, Minnesota officials have said that the FBI has blocked their access to the probe into ICE shooting, as a large number of protesters took to the streets. —*PTI*

UAE backed STC to disband in Yemen after Saudi tensions

CAIRO, 9 JAN

Yemen's Southern Transitional Council (STC) and its institutions will be dismantled immediately, the group's Secretary General said Friday, after weeks of unrest in southern areas and only a day after its leader fled to the United Arab Emirates. Abdulrahman Jalal al-Sebaihi made the announcement Friday in a televised address broadcast on Yemen TV.

This comes a day after the STC leader Aidarous al-Zubaidi fled Yemen by boat to Somalia and was later flown to Abu Dhabi. Al-Zubaidi has been accused of treason. The UAE backed the council, sparking a confrontation with Saudi Arabia, after STC fighters advanced in Hadramout and al-Mahra governorates and seemed to prepare to secede from Yemen. —*PTI*

GARBAGE MOUND COLLAPSE

2 dead, 38 missing in Philippines landslide

MANILA, 9 JAN

A massive landslide of garbage and debris at a landfill in the Philippines buried several buildings on Friday, killing two workers and injuring 12 others. Officials said at least 38 people remain missing after the slide struck Thursday afternoon in the village of Binaliw, Cebu City.

Rescuers pulled 13 people alive from the debris overnight and continued searching for others believed to be trapped. Landfill workers were among those affected. The garbage mound collapsed suddenly without warning on a day of good weather, said survivor Jaylord Antigua, an office landfill worker who escaped by crawling out from under the rubble with bruises to his face and arms.

Site of the landfill collapse in Phillipines PHOTO: FB/NESTOR ARCHIVAL

The remaining survivors were injured and taken to hospitals, regional police director Brig Gen Roderick Maranan said. Search and rescue operations continued for 38 missing people, Cebu Mayor Nestor Archival said Friday. Rescuers using earth-moving equipment combed through a damaged building with twisted tin roofs and mangled iron beams, including a warehouse where recyclable waste was sorted, while it remained unclear whether nearby homes were affected.

Such landfills and open dumpsites have long endangered poor communities in the Philippines, where residents scavenge for food and recyclables. The risks were highlighted in July, 2000, when a garbage mound collapsed in a Quezon City shantytown, killing more than 200 people and prompting tougher waste-management laws.

Authorities and waste management officials were set to hold an emergency meeting on Friday to address the issue, Archival said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Silver bounces back nearly 3% to Rs 2.5L/kg

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Silver rebounded by Rs 6,500 to Rs 2,50,000 per kg in the national capital on Friday, while gold advanced to Rs 1,41,700 per 10g on renewed demand for the safe-haven asset amid global uncertainty, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.9 per cent purity jumped by Rs 1,200 to Rs 1,41,700 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes).

On the global front, spot gold was marginally trading higher at USD 4,479.38 per ounce while silver went up by USD 1.37, or 1.79 per cent, to USD 78.38 per ounce. The white metal had plunged by USD 4.32, or 5.53 per cent, to hit an intraday low of USD 73.83 per ounce before settling at USD 76.92 per ounce in the international trade. *—PTI*

Rupee falls by 26P, closes at 90.16 against USD

MUMBAI, 9 JAN

The rupee declined 26 paise to settle at 90.16 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by elevated global crude oil prices and persistent foreign fund outflows amid rising geopolitical tensions. A stronger greenback and weak sentiment in domestic equity markets are putting further pressure on the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened higher at 89.88 but lost ground to settle at 90.16 (provisional) against the US dollar, down 26 paise from its previous close. During the day, the local currency traded between 89.88 and 90.25. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.11 per cent higher at 99.04. *—PTI*

Divorce case: Zoho co-founder asked to pay $1.7B bond

CALIFORNIA, 9 JAN

A California court has sharply criticised Zoho co-founder Sridhar Vembu in divorce proceedings, saying he failed to disclose key financial transactions and acted "without regard for the law". In a January 2025 order, the Superior Court of California in Alameda County directed Vembu to post an unprecedented $1.7 billion bond and appointed a receiver over several US-based Zoho entities and his personal assets to protect the rights of his estranged wife, Pramila Srinivasan. The judge said Vembu had acted against Pramila's interests in community assets, which under California law must be divided equally between spouses unless a prior agreement exists. The couple were married for nearly 30 years and filed for divorce in 2021. *—AGENCIES*

Akasa Air joins int'l airlines association IATA

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Akasa Air has joined global airlines' grouping International Air Transport Association (IATA) as a member. IATA represents over 360 airlines, including Indian carriers Air India, Air India Express, IndiGo and SpiceJet. In a release on Friday, Akasa Air said it became an IATA member after completing IATA Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) which is mandatory for the membership. With a fleet of 31 Boeing 737 MAX planes. Akasa Air connects 26 domestic and 6 international cities. About the IATA membership, Akasa Air Founder and CEO Vinay Dubey said the association will strengthen the airline's global credibility and position it as a future-ready Indian airline on the world stage. *—PTI*

India to grow 6.6% in 2026 amid global challenges: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 9 JAN

India is projected to grow at 6.6 per cent in 2026, marking "exceptionally high growth in a challenging global environment", with resilient private consumption and strong public investment expected to largely offset the impact of higher US tariffs, the United Nations has said.

The World Economic Situation and Prospects 2026 report said India's growth would moderate from an estimated 7.4 per cent in 2025 but remain the fastest among major economies.

"Resilient private consumption, strong public investment, recent tax reforms and lower interest rates are expected to support near-term growth," the report said, cautioning that higher US tariffs could weigh on exports in 2026 if current rates persist. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's exports, although key items such as electronics and smartphones are expected to remain exempt.

Strong demand from Europe and the Middle East is projected to partially offset tariff pressures, while expansion in manufacturing and services will remain key growth drivers.

Ingo Pitterle, Senior Economist at UN DESA, said South Asia would remain the world's fastest-growing region at 5.6 per cent, with India driving expansion due to domestic demand and easing inflation.

Consumer price inflation averaged three per cent in the first nine months, investment growth was led by higher public spending, and employment remained stable. *—PTI*

Vi gets AGR relief, to pay ₹124 cr annually for 6 yrs

Vi to pay govt ₹1,144 cr in 10 yrs for ₹87,000 cr AGR dues

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Offering a lifeline to struggling debt-laden telecom operator, the government has capped annual payouts to clear past dues at Rs 124 crore over the next six years, easing near-term cash flows, the company said on Friday.

Meanwhile, the shares of Vodafone Idea closed 2 per cent lower on Friday after surging nearly 9 per cent in early trade amid a weak trend in the broader equity market. The stock pared all the gains and ended at Rs 11.27, down 2 per cent on the BSE. On the NSE, the stock declined 2 per cent to end at Rs 11.26.

Between March 2032 and March 2035, the yearly outgo will be trimmed to Rs 100 crore, Vodafone Idea said in a stock exchange filing citing a communication received from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

It went on to state that the remaining of the adjusted gross revenue (AGR) dues shall have to be paid in equal installments annually over six years starting March 2036.

The government had on 31 December approved a partial moratorium Vodafone Idea's past dues, freezing them at Rs 87,695 crore that was to be cleared from 2031-32 to 2040-41.

This amount, too, will be reassessed by a committee based on an audit.

The relief measures approved by the Union Cabinet on 31 December were aimed at protecting the interest of the government (which has about 48.9 per cent stake in the telco), enable orderly payment of dues to the Centre by way of spectrum auction charges and AGR dues, ensure competition in the sector and safeguard the interests of 20 crore consumers of Vodafone Idea.

AGR dues refer to payments owed by telecom companies to the government based on AGR.

Besides these outstanding, the AGR dues for 2017-18 and 2018-19, which were finalised based on the Supreme Court order of September 2020, will now have to be paid over 2025-26 to 2030-31 fiscal years without any change. *—PTI*

3,104 STOCKS DECLINED

Markets buckle for 5th straight day

MUMBAI, 9 JAN

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty buckled under selling pressure for the fifth straight session on Friday, falling nearly 1 per cent, as investors turned cautious due to growing concerns over potential US tariff hikes amid lingering geopolitical worries.

The relentless foreign capital flight from Indian equities also affected the market sentiment, traders said.

After a brief rebound in early trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex failed to carry forward the momentum and tumbled 604.72 points, or 0.72 per cent, to sink below the 84,000-level and settle at 83,576.24. During the day, it dropped 778.68 points, or 0.92 per cent, to 83,402.28.

A total of 3,104 stocks declined, while 1,062 advanced and 176 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 193.55 points or 0.75 per cent to 25,683.30.

In the past five trading days, the BSE benchmark declined 2,185.77 points, or 2.54 per cent, and the Nifty tumbled 645.25 points, or 2.45 per cent.

From the Sensex, NTPC, ICICI Bank, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel, Sun Pharma and Bajaj Finance were among the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Bharat Electronics and Reliance Industries were among the gainers.

BSE smallcap gauge tanked 1.74 per cent, and the midcap index dropped 0.90 per cent. BSE Energy, IT, PSU bank, oil & gas, and BSE Focused IT were the winners. *—PTI*

'China's exports to India rose 33% during April-Nov'

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

China is gradually emerging as a major export destination for India, with shipments rising 33 per cent to $12.22 billion during April-November of the current fiscal, according to commerce ministry data.

The data is signalling a structural shift in the bilateral trade relationship.

The export increase was driven by products such as oil meals, marine products, telecom instruments and spices, the data showed.

During April-November 2024-25, India exported goods worth $9.2 billion. It was $9.89 billion in Apr-Nov 2022-23, and $10.28 billion in 2023-24. The sharp jump to $12.22 billion in 2025-26 not only reverses last year's decline but also marks the highest level in the past four years, the data showed.

In the electronics segment, the main items which registered growth during the first eight months included populated printed circuit boards (exports rose from $23.9 million to $922.4 million), flat panel display modules, and other electrical apparatus for telephony.

The main agriculture and marine products exported are dried chilies, black tiger shrimp, green gram, Vannamei shrimp, and oilcake residues. *—PTI*

- The sharp jump to $12.22 billion in 2025-26 not only reverses last year's decline but also marks the highest level in the past four years, the data showed.

Bharat Coking Coal IPO subscribed 8.1 times on Day 1

KOLKATA, 9 JAN

The initial public offering of Bharat Coking Coal Limited was subscribed 8.09 times on the first day of bidding on Friday, driven by strong demand from retail, non-institutional and existing shareholder investor categories.

The issue received bids for 2,80,61,36,400 equity shares against the offer size of 34,69,46,500 shares, according to data available on the stock exchanges.

The retail investors' portion was subscribed 9.26 times, while the non-institutional investors' segment saw subscription of 16.39 times. The shareholder-reserved portion was booked 10.86 times and the employee portion 0.83 times. The qualified institutional buyers' category was subscribed 0.30 times.

The issue opened for subscription on Firday and will close on January 13. Ahead of the issue opening, the company raised Rs 273.1 crore from anchor investors book.

At the upper end of the price band, the issue is valued at about 9 times price-to-earnings and around 2 times price-to-book value, as per offer documents. The issue will raise Rs 1,071 crore from this offer for sale by Coal India.

Bharat Coking Coal is the country's largest producer of coking coal, accounting for about 58.5 per cent of domestic coking coal output in FY25.

It is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Coal India Limited and holds estimated coal reserves of about 7,910 million tonnes. *—PTI*

- The issue got bids for 2,80,61,36,400 equity shares against the offer size of 34,69,46,500 shares, according to data from the stock exchanges.

RBI Guv pitches for measures to curb digital fraud

MUMBAI, 9 JAN

Financial institutions need to imbibe the spirit of regulations, rather than just "tick-box-based compliance culture", Reserve Bank Governor of India Sanjay Malhotra said on Friday as he pitched for a collaborative approach to curb digital frauds.

Addressing the Third Annual Global Conference of the College of Supervisors, the governor said while digital channels help improve inclusion and convenience, without guardrails, they can also facilitate opaque pricing, weak disclosures, and inappropriate recovery practices. Essentially, the objectives and purposes of the regulator and the regulated are the same — to ensure long-term growth, advancement, stability, integrity, and credibility of the financial system, he said.

He said supervisory action and enforcement are often viewed as most visible aspect of rules & supervision. *—PTI*

Lenovo to make AI servers in India for global mkt

LAS VEGAS, 9 JAN

Global technology major Lenovo is planning to transform India into a key export hub for its infrastructure business, with plans to design and manufacture artificial intelligence (AI) servers in the country for global markets.

Scott Tease, VP and general manager, Infrastructure Solutions Group at Lenovo, said the company will utilise its Bengaluru development lab to design AI server systems that will subsequently be manufactured at its Pondicherry facility for both domestic consumption and export.

Lenovo India is among the companies that have been selected for the Rs 17,000-crore IT hardware production-linked incentive scheme.

With the high cost of massive data centres often proving prohibitive for micro, small and medium enterprises, Tease advocated for a hybrid AI model. He said that Indian businesses do not necessarily need heavy investments to incorporate AI in their operations.

The common language for programming AI will be natural language, which democratises access to technology.

Lenovo is also pushing for liquid cooling technologies (Lenovo Neptune), which reduce energy consumption by 40 per cent, allowing waste heat to be recycled for other purposes. *—PTI*

Equity MF inflows dip 6% , SIP hits record

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Equity mutual funds drew Rs 28,054 crore in December, down more than 6 per cent from November, as investors booked profits amid volatile markets, data from industry body Amfi showed.

The slowdown in equity inflows coincided with a slight fall in the mutual fund industry's assets under management (AUM), which declined to Rs 80.23 lakh crore from Rs 80.80 lakh crore in November.

Overall, the industry recorded net outflows of Rs 66,591 crore during the month, largely due to sharp redemption from debt funds.Debt mutual funds saw heavy outflows of Rs 1.32 lakh crore, driven by year-end liquidity requirements, advance tax payments and balance-sheet adjustments by corporate and institutions. Amfi said such outflows are seasonal and not structural.

Despite moderation, equity inflows remained resilient, supported by record Systematic Investment Plan (SIP) contributions of Rs 31,000 crore in December. *—PTI*

SoftBank sells 2.15% Ola stake

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Japanese investment firm SoftBank, has sold 2.15 per cent of its holdings in Ola Electric mobility through its investment vehicle SVF II Ostrich LLC.

SVF has disposed of about 9.46 crore equity shares of Ola Electric Mobility Ltd in a series of disposals undertaken between September 2025 and January 2026, with the disposal on 5 January, 2026 breaching the 2 per cent threshold under SEBI regulations, SoftBank said in a BSE regulatory filing made by Ola Electric. After, the holding in Ola Electric fell to 13.53 per cent from 15.68 per cent.

Last year SVF had sold a total of 9.494 crore equity shares of Ola Electric in a series of disposals undertaken between July and September 2025, bringing down its stake to 15.68 per cent from 17.83 per cent. *—PTI*

₹34,000 cr invested in UP defence corridor: Rajnath

LUCKNOW, 9 JAN

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Friday said Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a major hub of defence manufacturing, with investments of over Rs 34,000 crore already made across six nodes of the state's defence corridor, marking a decisive shift towards India's self-reliance in weapons and ammunition production.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating Ashok Leyland's electric vehicle (EV) manufacturing plant here, Singh said India is no longer dependent on other countries for weapons, missiles or defence equipment. These are now being manufactured domestically, with a significant portion originating from UP.

The event was arrested by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Heavy Industries Minister HD Kumaraswamy.

Singh said the defence corridor, spread across Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Aligarh and Chitrakoot, is producing arms, ammunition and components for fighter aircraft, with major firms setting up manufacturing units in the state. *—PTI*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh driving Ashok Leyland's new military EV *PHOTO: ANI*

'TO SUPPORT MEDICAL CARE'

OpenAI can analyse medical records on ChatGPT Health

CALIFORNIA, 9 JAN

OpenAI has launched ChatGPT Health, in the US, for users' to analyse medical records and fitness app data, providing personalised medical answers. The new feature raises privacy concerns.

- OpenAI said 'conversations' within ChatGPT Health would be stored separately from other chats and not be used to train its AI models.

OpenAI said 'conversations' within ChatGPT Health would be stored separately from other chats and not be used to train its AI models.

The tool is designed to "support, not replace, medical care" and is not intended for diagnosis or treatment, OpenAI responded.

Users can share medical records and data from platforms such as Apple Health, Peloton and MyFitnessPal to receive more relevant answers. OpenAI said the feature includes "enhanced privacy to protect sensitive data".

Andrew Crawford of the Center for Democracy and Technology said it was "crucial" to ensure "airtight" safeguards around health information, warning that strict separation between health data and other user memories is essential.

OpenAI said over 230 million users ask its chatbot health-related questions weekly.

The feature is not yet available in the UK, Switzerland or the European Economic Area. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Kumkum gets top spot in women's recurve

KOLKATA, 9 JAN

Sixteen-year-old Kumkum Mohod performed consistently well to emerge as the top archer in the recurve women's section at the first selection trials on the Sports Authority of India campus in Kolkata on Friday. Hailing from Amaravati (Maharashtra), Kumkum, who finished third in the elimination phase, collected an overall 13.5 points over three stages to pip Olympian Ankita Bhakat, the elimination winner, by 0.5 points. Persuaded by her coach, Prafull Dange, to skip the National School Games in Ranchi to compete here, Kumkum, who made her international debut in the Asia Cup Stage-1 last year, got rewarded for her strong work ethic and hunger for success. "I visualised winning the trials," said Kumkum, who got a sponsorship offer from OGQ during the trials.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@NBA

Edwards makes NBA history with 10,000 career points

MINNEAPOLIS, 9 JAN

Anthony Edwards became the third-youngest player in NBA history to reach 10,000 career points when the Minnesota Timberwolves star swished a 13-foot fadeaway jumper from the baseline midway through the fourth quarter against Cleveland. Edwards, at 24 years and 156 days old, was beaten to the mark by just LeBron James (23 years, 59 days) and Kevin Durant (24 years, 33 days). Edwards is one of seven players who've hit 10,000 points before age 25, with Kobe Bryant, Luka Doncic, Tracy McGrady, and Carmelo Anthony also in that group.—*PTI*

FIFA picks TikTok as social video partner for WC

LONDON, 9 JAN

FIFA said the agreement "will lead to an enhanced level of collaboration and integration," allowing TikTok to offer more comprehensive World Cup coverage, including increased original content, while positioning the platform as a central hub for fans and creators throughout the tournament. The two organizations previously collaborated on the 2023 Women's World Cup, which FIFA said generated tens of billions of views on TikTok. Under the new partnership, TikTok will be able to livestream selected portions of World Cup matches, publish more curated clips, and access special content produced by FIFA specifically for the platform.—*PTI*

WTT Feeder: Hansini packs off third seed Yerin

DHAKA, 9 JAN

M. Hansini, the teenage prodigy, took a giant stride in her impressive table tennis journey on Friday as she stunned third seed Yoo Yerin of Korea in straight games in the first round of the WTT Feeder series international ranking tournament here on Friday. Hansini, the 16-year-old from Tamil Nadu, was at her sublime best as she defeated title contender Yerin 11-8, 11-3, 11-9 in straight games in 24 minutes. She then combined with Sampada Bhiwandkar to upset third seeded pair of Anusha Kutumbale and Poymantee Baisya 9-11, 15-13, 11-4, 6-11, 12-10 to enter the women's doubles quarterfinal. Another contender in women's singles, second seed Park Gaheyon survived a huge scare.—*PTI*

Sindhu advances to semis after Yamaguchi retires

Yamaguchi struggled to move freely and looked frustrated

KUALA LUMPUR, 9 JAN

MALAYSIA OPEN 2026

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu was leading 21-11 against reigning world champion Yamaguchi PHOTO: PTI

India's ace shuttler PV Sindhu progressed to the semifinals of the women's singles event at the Malaysia Open badminton tournament after injury concerns forced her Japanese opponent, Akane Yamaguchi, to retire midway at the Stadium Axiata Arena here on Friday.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu was leading 21-11 against reigning world champion Yamaguchi before the Japanese shuttler told the chair umpire she could not continue, as her injury was hampering her movement. Yamaguchi, who arrived at the court with a knee brace, did not look comfortable from the outset as Sindhu quickly built up a 10-2 lead.

Yamaguchi struggled to move freely and looked frustrated when her shots missed the lines. Her tactic of pushing Sindhu deep into the backcourt did bring her 11 points, but too many unforced errors meant she made little impact on the final result.

The Indian took just 12 minutes to wrap up the first game, after which the Japanese conceded to give Sindhu her first Super 1000 semifinal in three years. Sindhu reached the Malaysia Open semifinals for the first time in eight years and will next face either sixth-seeded Indonesian Putri Kusuma Wardani or second-seeded Chinese Wang Zhi.

Satwik-Chirag crash out in quarters

India's top men's doubles duo Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty were ousted in the quarter-finals of the Malaysia Open 2026 badminton tournament after a straight-game defeat on Friday.

Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty, the two-time world championships bronze medallists and reigning Asian Games champions, went down 21-10, 23-21 against sixth seeds Fajar Alfian and Muhammad Shohibul Fikri of Indonesia.

Satwik-Chirag's loss ended India's doubles campaign at the BWF Super 1000 tournament.

The Indian duo made a slow start to the contest, allowing the Indonesian pair to race to a 5-0 lead before holding an 11-5 advantage at the interval en route to comfortably wrapping up the opener. —*PTI*

INVITES WRATH OF B'DESH PLAYERS

BCB official calls Tamim 'an Indian agent'

DHAKA, 9 JAN

A senior Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) official calling former captain Tamim Iqbal "an Indian agent" has not gone down well with the players in the country.

Tamim, one of the finest openers to have come out of Bangladesh, had advised the BCB not be driven by emotion while deciding the way forward on the national team's participation in the T20 World Cup in India.

Nazmul, chairman of the BCB finance committee, called the left-hander opener "an Indian agent" in a Facebook post.

The post received immediate backlash from former and current cricketers, including Taskin Ahmed, Momimul Haque, and Taijul Islam.

Even the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh (CWAB) expressed shock at Nazmul's comments.

"A comment made by BCB director M Nazmul Islam regarding former national captain Tamim Iqbal has come to the attention of the Cricketers' Welfare Association of Bangladesh. We are stunned, shocked, and outraged by it.

Don't be driven by emotion, think about future: Tamim

Former Bangladesh skipper Tamim Iqbal has urged the country's Cricket Board to avoid being driven by "public emotion" while deciding the national team's participation in next month's T20 World Cup in India, as any such call would have an "impact 10 years down the line".

Bangladesh has expressed reluctance to tour India for the event starting February 7 and wants its matches to be shifted to co-host Sri Lanka, citing security concerns. This was after Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman was released from IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on instructions of the BCCI for unspecified reasons amid attacks on Hindus here. —*PTI*

IND VS NZ: 1ST ODI MATCH-TRAINING

Senior batters Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma looked in good shape as India went through a rigorous training session here on Friday, ahead of their three-match ODI series against New Zealand PHOTO: PTI

UP Warriorz, Gujarat Giants eye early momentum

NAVI MUMBAI, 9 JAN

Match starts at 3 pm on Star Sports

A fresh chapter beckons UP Warriorz and Gujarat Giants as the two sides open their Women's Premier League campaign on Saturday, both sides chasing a maiden title after contrasting runs in the previous season. UP Warriorz will lean heavily on new captain Meg Lanning, under whose leadership Delhi Capitals reached three consecutive finals, to arrest a steady slide that has seen the team finish third, fourth, and then at the bottom of the table across the first three seasons.

The Australian great's arrival is expected to bring clarity and calm to a side that struggled for balance and consistency last year in the absence of skipper Alyssa Healy.

However, questions remain around the Warriorz's squad composition, particularly in the wicket-keeping department, where Shipra Giri is the lone specialist option.

At the top, Phoebe Litchfield provides flexibility, with the possibility of partnering with Kiran Navgire. The Warriorz boast of a potent bowling attack that combines world-class spin, experienced new ball operators, and proven death specialists. —*PTI*

MANCHESTER CITY SIGNS SEMENYO FROM BOURNEMOUTH

LONDON, 9 JAN

Manchester City has signed Ghanaian winger Antoine Semenyo from Bournemouth on a contract until 2031, the Premier League club said on Friday as it made one of the league's in-form players its first signing of the January transfer window.

Financial details of the deal were not disclosed, but British media reported that City agreed to meet his 65 million pounds (USD 87 million) release clause, amid interest from other Premier League clubs. The 26-year-old, who can play on both wings, is the third-highest scorer in the Premier League this season with 10 goals. He also has three assists.

"I have watched City over the last decade under Pep Guardiola, and they have been the dominant team in the Premier League as well as achieving amazing things in the Champions League, FA Cup, and League Cup," Semenyo said in a statement. —*PTI*

BOXING NATIONALS: NIKHAT AND LOVLINA MARCH ON

GREATER NOIDA, 9 JAN

Promising youngster Jadumani Singh upstaged seasoned campaigner Amit Panghal to storm into the final, while star boxers Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain stayed on course for gold with semifinal wins at the National Championships here on Friday.

The 21-year-old Jadumani (55kg) relied on relentless aggression, speed and punch volume to clinch a unanimous 5-0 verdict over two-time Olympian and world championships silver medallist Panghal.

Both boxers, representing the Services Sports Control Board, have moved up from the non-Olympic 50kg category and were involved in a high-intensity, fast-paced contest.

Jadumani took control from the opening round, working effectively at close range and unleashing flurries from all angles. —*PTI*

Administrators to be there for athletes sport events: Govt

AHMEDABAD, 9 JAN

India's sports administrators were on Friday told that treating multi-sport events as an "outing with family" instead of being there for athletes will not be tolerated, and were asked to give names for the Asian Games contingent by January 15 at a Sports Governance Conclave here.

The Conclave was attended by Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya and also featured top officials from the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and National Sports Federations, Gujarat's Deputy Chief Minister and Sports Minister Harsh Sanghavi, and Sports Secretary Hari Ranjan Rao.

"It would be shameful if a large contingent of officials goes and not one is available when the athlete needs them. They have to be there 100 per cent of the time for the athletes. Please don't go if you think of this as an outing with relatives. We don't need you," Rao stated as he laid out the country's 10-year medal strategy that has Prime Minister approval. —*PTI*

Antim Panghal gears up for PWL challenge

NEW DELHI, 9 JAN

Yui Susaki's matches are playing on Antim Panghal's phone almost every day.

That homework has become central to Antim's preparation for the upcoming Pro Wrestling League (PWL), where a face-off with two-time Olympic medallist Susaki is on the cards.

The Japanese, widely regarded as the most dominant wrestler in the world, does not intimidate the young Indian she intrigues her.

Antim speaks of Susaki with respect, but without awe.

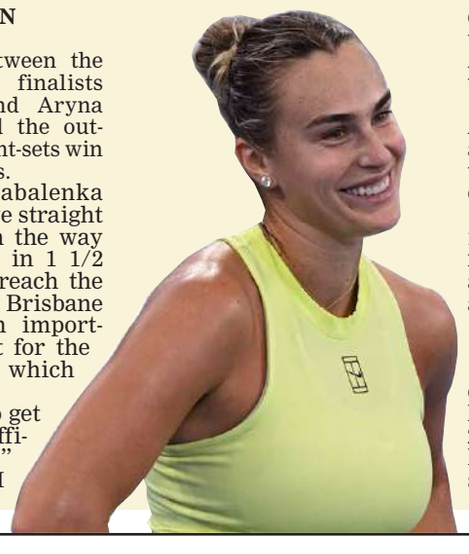
"She is the best wrestler in the world. She has more experience than I, but she is 50kg, and I am 53kg, plus I am younger. So I am watching her bouts closely how she attacks, how she defends, what kind of mistakes she doesn't make," Antim told PTI in an interview. Four-time world champion Susaki attracted a Rs 60 lakh bid from Haryana Thunder in the women's 53kg category, making her the costliest buy at the recent PWL auction. Bought for Rs 52 lakh by UP Dominators, the 21-year-old Indian wrestler knows that it won't be easy to win against a near-unbeaten opponent. "Her defence is very solid. She doesn't give legs (points) easily. She mostly attacks and waits. So I have to defend well and attack more. I have to ensure that she does not get the opportunity to attack me much."

Susaki's aura has been punctured only once at the senior level by Vinesh Phogat during the 2024 Paris Games and Antim has studied that bout frame by frame. —*PTI*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN TUNEUP

Sabalenka flips the outcome with a straight win

BRISBANE, 9 JAN



This rematch between the Australian Open finalists was lopsided, and Aryna Sabalenka flipped the outcome with a straight-sets win over Madison Keys.

Top-ranked Sabalenka broke Keys' in five straight service games on the way to a 6-3, 6-3 win in 1 1/2 hours Friday to reach the semifinals of the Brisbane International, an important tuneup event for the Australian Open, which begins 18 Jan.

"Super happy to get through this difficult match," Sabalenka said. "I didn't really have the throwback to the Australian Open last year, to be honest.

"I know that I lost in Australia against her, and it's a big motivation, of course, to go out and get the win.

But I always look into the (next) match as if it were a new match against a new player.

That's my approach."

The defending Brisbane champion will next take on 11th-seeded Karolina Muchova, who had a 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 win over Elena Rybakina to end a 13-match streak for the No. 3 seed.

Wawrinka receives a wildcard in his farewell season

Former champion Stan Wawrinka was handed a wildcard on Friday for the Australian Open in his final season. Final three wildcards went to three-time Grand Slam winner Wawrinka, and Australians Thompson and Chris O'Connell. Switzerland's Wawrinka, 40, is playing his last season before retiring. He won the first of his Majors at Melbourne in 2014, a season during which he peaked at world number three, and reached two other semifinals. —*PTI*

Real Madrid beats Atletico 2-1 to set up Clasico final

JEDDAH, 9 JAN

Real Madrid got goals from Federico Valverde and Rodrygo to beat Atletico Madrid 2-1, setting up a Clásico final at the Spanish Super Cup played in Saudi Arabia.

Valverde put Madrid ahead just two minutes into the match in Jeddah when the Uruguay midfielder scored directly from a free kick with a fierce strike that Jan Oblak could not keep out.

Valverde then helped make it 2-0 in the 55th when he threaded a pass through the middle of Atletico's defense to meet Rodrygo's run. The Brazil forward, who is playing well after a subpar season last year, did the rest by beating Oblak with a low strike for the winner.

Alexander Sorloth pulled Atletico close three minutes later when the striker headed in a cross by Giuliano Simeone. Atletico pressed for the equalizer but came up short.

Madrid was playing without the injured Kylian Mbappé, sidelined with a left knee sprain for a second straight game. —*PTI*